

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

Wild

MORE THAN 30 YEARS OF WILDERNESS ADVENTURE HERITAGE

ISSUE

153

EASY WALK: THREE CAPES TRACK
MOUNTAINEERS: THE ABELISTS
CLIMBING TREES FOR ADULTS
BASE CAMP COOKING
TRIED AND TESTED: LANTERNS
COLOMBIA'S LOST CITY
HOW AUSSIE FORESTS EVOLVED
FOLIO: WOLFGANG GLOWACKI

Living against the grain

Visit the Tarkine
Paddling Lake Yarrunga
Queensland forest bushwalks
Photographer Doug Gimesy
Adventure training schedules 101

ISSN 1030-469X



MAY-JUN 2016, NO 153
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Wild

AUSTRALIAN WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

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Wild would like to acknowledge and show respect for the traditional custodians of Australia and of their elders, both past and present.

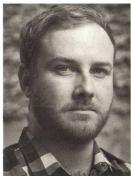
WARNING



The activities covered in this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety and equipment could result in serious injury or death.

Cover Andrea Pumomo, paddles between dead trees on Lake Yarrunga, Mikhail Zenon

Contents In Tallarook State Forest, Michele Kohout



"The Pacific coral reef, as a kind of oasis in a desert, can stand as an object lesson for man who must now learn that mutualism between autotrophic and heterotrophic components, and between producers and consumers in the societal realm, coupled with efficient recycling of materials and use of energy, are the keys to maintaining prosperity in a world of limited resources."

— EUGENE ODUM, 'THE EMERGENCE OF ECOLOGY AS A NEW INTEGRATIVE DISCIPLINE' (1977)

Endosymbiotic Theory

Ever since Antonie van Leeuwenhoek used a rudimentary microscope to demonstrate the existence of microorganisms in the 17th Century, our investigations of biological processes beyond the range of the naked eye have progressed rapidly.

Unfortunately, those worlds that remain beyond our vision often remain beyond our collective imaginations. For the degree to which these biological interactions – at the level of tissues, cells, and the organelles within them – influence our existence, this is an unfortunate state of affairs.

In the above (rather lengthy) quote, the American biologist, Eugene Odum describes an idea that occurred to him while testing a hypothesis in the mid-50s. He had theorised that a high rate of primary production for the entire reef system 'was an emergent property resulting from symbiotic linkages' between the entire assemblage of plant and animal components. Odum was suggesting that the sum of the system's parts were in some way working together to mutual benefit for each, as well as the whole. This theory sparked some minor controversy among his peers at the time, leading to 'a number of investigations' which, by the time he wrote about how it might have practical relevance for human society, had generally proven the theory correct.

While the symbiotic relationships of the reef, as they are in the forest, demonstrate the concept of mutualism at a human scale, there are many more potential examples to be found under the microscope. To look again at coral reefs, the coral itself is a structure composed of thousands of tiny organisms. The bleaching event that is currently devastating the Great Barrier Reef is in fact a process by which these symbiotic organisms, called zooxanthellae, are ejected from the coral structure. This happens when the coral's

environmental temperature or carbon levels become intolerable.

For centuries, microscopic pioneers have compared the similarities that can be found between certain free-ranging microorganisms and the tiny organelles that exist within our cells. For example, the mitochondrion found in the cells of most 'higher' organisms processes the energy that drives each cell, yet it in itself bears some striking resemblance to certain types of bacteria. Likewise, the chloroplasts found in plant cells, which use chlorophyll to conduct photosynthesis, bear many resemblances with cyanobacteria, which are capable of the same function. Scientists theorise that these organelles are essentially cells within cells, trapped there by some quirk of evolution, and thereby becoming 'endosymbionts', much in the same way that the zooxanthellae are found within corals.

At an even finer scale, Sir Richard Dawkins makes the argument that our DNA is in fact a collection of symbiotic units (an idea developed in his book, *The Selfish Gene*), that our bodies are 'gigantic colonies of symbiotic genes'.

While the title of this issue, 'Living against the grain', combined with the stories and images within it, may give the impression that we've centred our theme around trees and forests, I hope this letter casts a new light on the concept.

Perhaps that feeling of deep time that comes from immersing oneself in an old-growth forest is actually the peripheral awareness of the vast interconnectivity of billions of tiny life forms.

Campbell Phillips
Editor

Wild

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Issue 152, Mar-Apr 2016

LETTER OF THE ISSUE

Leigh wins a Therm-a-Rest NeoAir Voyager valued at \$219.95. A comfortable sleeping mat combining the patent-pending stability of WaveCore™ construction with a reflective ThermoCapture™ layer for added warmth.



FISHERMEN FIENDS?

When visiting national parks I often enquire from the ranger/manager if it is ok to kill a possum or kookaburra - or maybe a snake that could be barbecued for a meal. The rangers are quite definite that killing animals is wrong, even for food. They inform me that harming wildlife in a national park is illegal. However, mention another animal - the fish - and the story is quite different. People can kill fish without impeding in many national parks. And in most rivers and marine environments of Australia it is not illegal to kill fish for fun. In fact 'fishing' is quite acceptable and could almost be considered a national pastime for Australians. Our attitude to fish is grossly inconsistent with our attitude to most other animals. Few people would balk at hooking a fish through the mouth, dragging it out of the water and then drowning it in air. How many people would hook a snake or lizard through the mouth, drag it out of the grass and then drown it in water, just for fun? In addition to overlooking cruelty, the popularity of 'fishing' as a past time is also often rationalised by the perception that the oceans and fresh waters are infinite sources of commodities (as well as sinks for waste). However this is not the case. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimated that 70 per cent of 600 marine fish stocks are fully exploited, overexploited or depleted (Review of the State of World Marine Fisheries Resources, 2011). I hope that in the future, recreational "fishing" will be seen for what it really is - the killing of animals

for pleasure, and that people will instead prefer to observe fish as part of nature.

Leigh Ackland
Deephene, VIC

PLASTIC PRESSURE IN GEAR

I wonder if Wild could survive without promoting any product that is not totally recyclable. Having had a Trangia for over 35 years now, I am doing okay (better than throwing away gas cans), but still I have a plastic bottle to dispose of. Unfortunately I discovered that the bottle might be recycled, but like many plastics after being turned into fleece sheds micro (small) particles all its life. Your gear page may suffer, but without 'commitment' as David Suzuki says, nothing much will be achieved. We need to put more pressure on suppliers.

Wally Hueneker
Mentone, VIC

WILD POLITICS

The outdoors and environment unfortunately has become very much a 'political' issue. We tend to be always on the back foot regarding the environment and encroachment seems to be the norm. I fully support your stand on this issue and if we all avoided challenging and acting against the destructive forces that put our wild areas at risk we will soon lose them. An outdoor magazine by default must stand up for the environment. A couple of very good letters there too. Keep up the good work, Campbell.

Russell Chiffey
Coffs Harbour, NSW

STICKY SUBJECT

Your informative article on the giant Lord Howe Island Stick Insect ('Famous stick insects now born abroad', March-April 2016) included an error that has also appeared in other articles. It is not true that this insect 'was believed to be extinct until it was rediscovered in 2001 on Balls Pyramid'. Dave Roots, during an unsuccessful attempt to climb the Pyramid in 1964, photographed a specimen, which had only been dead for a short time. During the second successful ascent of the Pyramid, in 1969, I found exoskeletons of the same species, which were bought back to the Australian Museum. Articles were published in scientific journals confirming that the specimens found by Dave Roots and myself were indeed the Lord Howe Island species that had previously been thought to be extinct. Entomologists have known since 1964 that there was a surviving population on Balls Pyramid. The

2001 expedition confirmed this by finding live individuals. The full story of the Lord Howe Island Stick Insect can be found in Rick Wilkinson's book *Return of the Phasmid*, published in 2014 and in my forthcoming book on the history of the exploration of Balls Pyramid, which will be available mid-2016.

Dr Jim Smith
Wentworth Falls, NSW



One of the Lord Howe Island Stick Insect exoskeletons found on Balls Pyramid in 1969. Photo by John Davis (1943-2015)

WELCOME TO WILD

As an introverted and sensitive teenager growing up in the 70s I recall watching news footage of what my family patronisingly referred to as 'greenies' engaging in fervent protest, at times culminating in violent confrontation. This cause was, I resolved with some distress, of no concern to me. On a recent holiday to Kangaroo Island I was drawn to purchase a copy of your magazine. Drawn not to its environmental content, but as an enthusiastic photographer, to the article on photography in New Zealand. I tucked the mag away to be read in a quiet moment. We meandered on, savouring the pristine wilderness of the island, stopping for a light meal at Cape Willoughby. Our host, seeing my interest in photography, shared with me a prototype of a photography book by Quentin Chester. Magic stuff! Back on the mainland my quiet moment arrived and I dug out the mag. I was captivated, and of course delighted to read Quentin's article on co-habitation with the locals. I've now read the mag from cover to cover and have been profoundly impacted. The content is thoughtful and intelligent, but most significantly has awoken the latent 'greenie' within. It seems to me that there are times when we reject behaviours without fully understanding the intent that sits beneath them. Thank you for igniting a spark of awareness (and who knows what behaviours might follow). I await the next edition with enthusiasm.

Jane Austin
Sandringham, VIC

THE WINNER: BUSHWALKING TIP



After many years of trying to find the best way to scrub eating utensils, like all great discoveries, it was obvious: The same thing we use to clean our teeth! The humble toothbrush dipped in boiling water, with the end slightly bent using pliers, then put in cold to maintain the angle. We have tried scouring pads cut into small squares plus (in keeping with last edition) and Chux. All these eventually clog up and present possible tummy issues. The toothbrush is extremely easy to clean after use. And by the way, the Chux story expands: green for drying eating utensils, pink for body washing and blue for general use. Or was that pink for drying dishes and green for

body washing? Ah, doesn't matter.

Stephen Boyle
Gravelly Beach, TAS

Stephen wins a Petzl TIKKA R+, valued at \$154.95. This water resistant headlamp outputs up to 170 lumens and features Petzl's famous Reactive Lighting Technology. It is compact and USB rechargeable, ideal for dynamic, energetic activities.



CORRECTION

In the previous issue, *Wild* 152, our ATGS department written by Noeline Proud featured Gilbert's potoroo. Sharp-eyed readers may have noticed we placed an image of a quokka as the feature image of this piece; a misleading error in layout that was of no fault of the author's. For the complete and unabridged version of this piece, please visit the below address.

www.wild.com.au/magazine/features/gilberts-potoroo-last-stronghold.

Paddling adventures on the Murray River Credit: Brad Lester



"Ten kilometres in and not an eddy in sight. Time to relax."



"Whooooaaaaaarrrrr!!"



"OK, maybe let's not relax just yet!"

Readers' letters & tips are welcome and could win you a useful piece of outdoor kit.

Write to *Wild*, 11-15 Buckhurst St, South Melbourne, VIC 3025 or email wild@primecreative.com.au

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Tunnel VISION

Alan Fowkes from Kings Park, NSW writes: *This is a shot of my partner Jules contemplating the sheer cliffs and wide open spaces out the front of Gosang's Tunnel. As the name implies, the ledge is accessed by a short scramble through a tunnel on Little Beecroft Head, NSW. This place may only be a short bushwalk from Currarong but I reckon it's still wild! Taken with a Canon EOS 7D.*

Photographer's checklist: Forest photography

Taking pictures of trees and forests is one of my favourite subjects. Nothing beats being in isolation within an ancient forest or in the presence of a tree that has lived for hundreds, if not thousands of years. In order to get the most from these locations, capturing the mood is tantamount to capturing the subject – especially if that subject is perennially threatened by human development and logging.

- Forests are generally dark, so it is important that you carry your tripod with you. Exposure times within the forest will increase greatly as the amount of light penetrating the forest canopy will most likely be low. Using a tripod can also assist in capturing a greater depth of field by experimenting with higher aperture settings. For example, setting your aperture at f2.8 will get a result without a tripod, but you'll be able to capture images set to f11 with the tripod, thereby creating more depth within

your shot, leading your viewer 'into and through' the forest.

- Another good rule with forest and tree photography is the use of a 'circular polarising filter'. This filter, which is generally used for open landscape shots to help with flare and skies, can also work wonders in a forest. The filter will help reduce any flare off tree trunks as well as really punch up the greens within your shot. You will notice a huge difference in shots between those with the filter and those without.
- When to shoot: Ideal times for forest shots are early morning (forests generally hold foggy conditions longer) or late afternoon when you get those amazing, warm rays of light penetrating the forest. In the middle of the day, harsh sunlight will create very high contrast scenes where you have a huge variance between the highlight and shadow details.

- If you are shooting a solitary tree, take the same approach that you would if you were shooting a portrait of a person. Trees have scars, moods, good sides and bad. Use the lighting to create mood on the trunk, or, if the tree has some unique bark or texture, highlight this in your shot. Trees trunks have amazing details, patterns and colours, so don't be afraid to crop in really tight and fill the frame purely with the bark or pattern of the tree. A great example of this is the alpine snow gums, the colours (purple, oranges, brown, grey) and patterns make for great images.



Award-winning landscape photographer Cameron Blake runs weekend workshops and six-day tours on the Overland Track. His next tour departs on the 3rd of November, 2016. overlandphototours.com.au

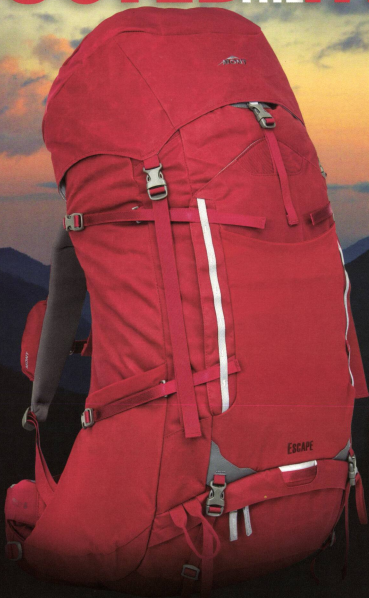


Alan wins a Down Sweater from Patagonia, valued at \$299. This classic garment is lightweight and windproof with a 100% recycled polyester ripstop shell and 800-fill-power Traceable Down. For your chance to win a quality piece of

outdoor kit, send your humorous, inspiring or spectacular shots to wild@primecreative.com.au.

To be considered for the July/August Wild Shot, submit your best photo by May 31.

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Great Barrier Reef film tech leads to whale of a discovery

When a long-time researcher of dwarf minke whales had the opportunity to work on the latest Sir David Attenborough documentary, it led to a breakthrough in his work beyond expectations.

Dr Dean Miller is a marine biologist with a love for these whales that began with his first encounter just out of university, but it's his proficiency with technology that led him to working with Canon's latest 4K video technology, and subsequently on Attenborough's new Great Barrier Reef documentary.

According to Miller, both Attenborough's and the general public's interest in dwarf minke whales arises from the air of mystery that surrounds the species – despite annual encounters with the whales in the vicinity of the reef each year, researchers are still yet to



Dr Dean Miller.
Photo: Aaron Jamieson

witness feeding or breeding behaviour.

With the power of the new filming technology, however, Miller is better equipped to document the whales' behaviours and physical characteristics, which has led to some surprising findings. "4K video means super high resolution compared to anything else available," he explained to *Wild*. "The difference between 4K and HD in terms of being able to use the footage for research purposes is like clearing a foggy dive mask – the amount of detail that can be seen is incredible."

Armed with a 4K-enabled Canon DSLR camera, Miller and his colleagues have been able to capture footage that allows them to accurately identify individual whales, their genders and subtle behaviours. His work also includes the first ever vocalisations from a dwarf minke (which means we may need to reconsider their unofficial nickname, 'the silent whale').

"The patterns we see on the dwarf minke whales are the most intricate of all baleen whales, making them extremely unique. We can use the individual swirls and blotches of pigments on their bodies just like fingerprints, allowing us to identify animals within an encounter, within a season and between years, making this our strongest tool for understanding the biology and behaviour of these whales."

All of Miller's findings on the species are published in peer-reviewed journals with a hope of increasing our understanding of these mysterious creatures and conserving the environment they live in.

These aims align with Attenborough's documentary on the Great Barrier Reef, which is currently at risk of extinction, with as much as half the reef undergoing a mass-bleaching event. The documentary is also rumoured to be Attenborough's last work to take place 'in the field'.

In the meantime, Miller continues to employ technology to further the outcomes of his work, as well as his enjoyment of it, having recounted the events that led to a female dwarf minke presenting him with her calf. It was the first time he'd witnessed a calf up close in 15 years of study.

"No more than three to four weeks old, this little calf came straight up to me like a little wind-up toy. There was complete trust, from mum, who let the calf know it was all safe, and the calf itself, who was experiencing its first human!"

"This little calf played with me for about 40 minutes over two separate encounters and I had the camera rolling the whole time."



Dwarf minke whale. Photo: John Rumney,
Eye to Eye Marine Encounters

Healthy benefits for taking a break in nature

by Rich Gilmore

For those unable to live and work everyday in the great outdoors, the physical and mental health benefits of a wilderness adventure are invaluable. But what about the rest of the year?

An ever-rising number of Australians find themselves spending the majority of their day in urban areas, working long hours and spending more time indoors. Just four weeks in holidays every year seems scarcely adequate for escaping the grind and 'resetting' in nature. For this reason, experts recommend that we not only consider taking regular breaks for fresh air and exercise, but there's also a growing push for people to avoid taking those breaks in man-made spaces.

Evidence Mounts

An increasing amount of research shows that even taking small breaks or exercising in natural spaces has greater rewards for our health than remaining indoors or in 'built' environs. For example, in 2009 a team of Dutch researchers¹ found a lower incidence of 15 diseases—including depression, anxiety, heart disease, diabetes, asthma, and migraines—in people who lived within a kilometre of green space.

In 2013, research from England², conducted by the University of Exeter Medical School, found that people living in proximity to greater amounts of 'green space' reported less mental distress (the study adjusted for income, education and employment, which also have a significant impact on health).

Both of the above examples indicate that living near green space, and thereby having greater access to those places, has knock-on effects for an individual's health. What they don't show is the immediate benefits that even a brief outing in nature can provide—even if you don't happen to live nearby. In Japan, researchers at Chiba University³ have made this exact case by asking a group of 84 people to spend 15 minutes in forests, while the same number were directed to stroll around city centres. The result? A walk in the woods resulted in a 16 per cent decrease in the stress-related hormone cortisol, a two per cent drop in blood pressure and a four per cent drop in heart rate.

Motivating Workers to 'Go Natural'

Given the clear evidence, it seems imperative that people with the least regular access to natural spaces—office workers—are given the greatest motivation to take a green break. Not only are such breaks great for the individuals; healthier, happier workers make for much better businesses and organisations.

Making small changes like taking lunch breaks in the nearest park is a great way for office workers to reconnect with nature in their everyday jobs. Committing to spend even one hour a week outdoors will see Australians reap the rewards of nature to live more energised lives.

Rich Gilmore is the country director for The Nature Conservancy Australia.

References:

1. *Morbidity is related to a green living environment.* J Maas et al. *J Epidemiol Community Health*, October 2009; vol. 63, 12: pp. 967-973.

2. *Would You Be Happier Living in a Greener Urban Area? A Fixed-Effects Analysis of Panel Data.* M White et al. *Psychological Science*, June 2013; vol. 24, 6: pp. 920-928.

3. *Preventive medical effects of nature therapy.* Y Miyazaki et al. *Nihon Eiseigaku Zasshi*. September 2011; vol. 66, 4: pp. 651-6.

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Daniel Mattison/fatcycling.wordpress.com

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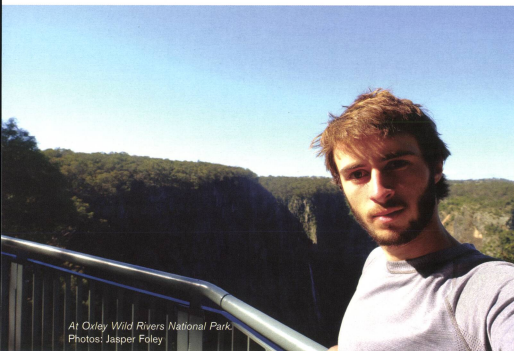
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Long ride for young adventurer



At Oxley Wild Rivers National Park.
Photos: Jasper Foley



Sunset at Nowendoc

Having completed high school in 2014, Jasper Foley decided to do what many school leavers do and take a gap year. He then proceeded to break the mould in the way he chose to spend that time.

Foley has recently completed a south-north cycle of Australia, riding nearly the entire Great Dividing Range, beginning in Lakes Entrance, Victoria and completing in Cape Tribulation, Queensland. 4200 kilometres in total.

"I decided to take this trip because I wanted to see Australia," Foley told Wild in a recent interview. "A lot of young people travel overseas when they finish school, which is a cool thing to do, but I think there's a lot to be said for learning more about one's home country."

"And riding a bike is cheap," he added.

Foley chose to avoid travelling along the coast as a way to avoid major roads, and while this meant he had to work harder to traverse frequently hilly or mountainous terrain, he still managed to complete the entire journey in three-and-a-half months (including several breaks and visits with family and friends along the way).

Riding solo for each leg of the journey, Foley made camp in national parks and sometimes on the side of the road, including an interesting night alongside Federal Highway.

"The trip was absolutely beautiful," he said, "with moments where I felt a complete sense of freedom and joy. I travelled through over 20 national parks and witnessing the diversity and splendour that is exhibited along just the east coast of Australia is something that will stick with me."

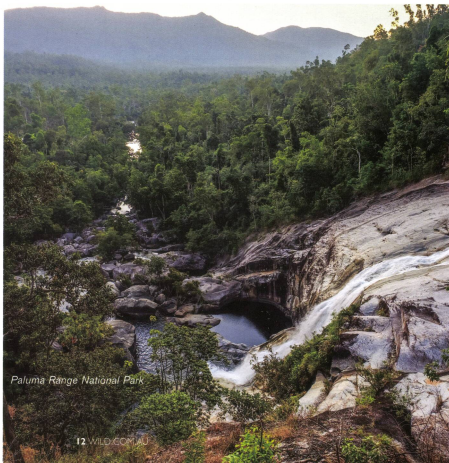
However, a trip such as this doesn't go by

without a trial or two, and Foley tells us there were several times when he felt like giving up, particularly towards the end of his trip when he began being afflicted by multiple flat tyres each day, for several consecutive days.

"Another time I was camping in the southern end of Barrington Tops National Park trying to decide on the best route. I could either ride 90 kilometres around the park or I could ride up to

the start of a walking track, ride 16 kilometres through the middle of the park before trying to make camp at the other end. I decided to cut through the park.

"The ride to the trailhead was 20 kilometres and took me three hours at something close to a brisk walking pace. I arrived at the trailhead and found the track was about three degrees off vertical, and it was raining and muddy."



Paluma Range National Park

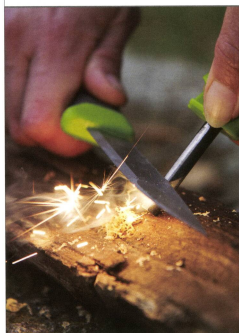


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Foley tells us he ended up having to alternate between pushing and carrying his bike, along with all his equipment, for around six hours or more before making camp in the dark. As it turns out, he'd made it to within three kilometres of the end of the track and a proper camp.

"I honestly believe that it was a wise decision to go through the park rather than around, because that was one of the most memorable and personally inspiring moments of my entire trip," he laughed.

Planning to commence his university degree in the middle of this year, Foley hopes to some day continue his ride on from Cairns to Broome "and then potentially down to Perth and across the south coast", eventually finishing where he began in Lakes Entrance. There are also distant plans for a north-south ride through the Americas – but that's some way off.

For now, Foley's message is to encourage other people, of any age, to consider getting out and seeing as much of the country as possible.

"Before going, I had never even ridden a road bike and didn't know how to change a flat tire. Between cycling and walking, there is no better way to see the country."

Barron River Challenge May 7-8, QLD

Hosted by the Tinaroo Canoe Club, this event challenges participants to canoe or kayak from Mareeba to Kuranda – a distance of 50km. A shorter, 12km option is also available.
tinaroo.canoe.org.au

Paddy Pallin Adventure Series May 21 & 22, NSW

The Paddy Pallin Adventure Series continues at Royal National Park this May. Each round includes 15-25km of mountain biking, 5-10km of running/trekking and a 2-4km paddle.
paddypallinadventure.com.au

The Icebreaker Multiport Event May 22, TAS

Centred on Lake Trevallyn, the event begins with a 9km kayak, followed by a brief run before embarking on an 18km mountain bike ride. After that it's a 8.5km trail run along the edge of the lake. Individuals and teams allowed.
theicebreaker.com.au

Mountain Designs' GeoQuest June 10-13, NSW

The GeoQuest is a 48-hour, team-based endurance race that covers the major disciplines of trekking, mountain biking and kayaking. There's also a half-length version that still requires 48 hours to complete.
www.geoquest.com.au

Bird Activity at Larapinta June 19, QLD

Register with NPAQ to join this birdwatching event from the new BCC circuit track at Dan Stiller Reserve.
www.npaq.org.au

World Regaining Championships July 23-24, NT

Taking place this year in the East McDonnell Ranges 1 hour from Alice Springs, the World Regaining Championships will bring together teams of the best athlete-navigators from around the world.
worldregainingschamps.com.au

First walk: Three Capes Track

by Keren Lavelle

The new – and somewhat controversial – 46-kilometre Three Capes Track in Tasmania's Tasman National Park opened to the public late last year. The controversy stems from the fact that this is the first commercial walking track developed by the Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service (TPWS), and that a fee applies (adult: \$495, concession: \$396, child: \$396) for a four-day, three-night walk with accommodation supplied. Some people feel aggrieved by the imposition of a high fee to enjoy a national park. However, the whole enterprise (construction of the track and accommodation, planning, project management, website and marketing) has cost \$25.3 million, with the key aim of

making the walk accessible to more than just the extremely fit. Ben Clark, business enterprise coordinator of the Three Capes Track, tells me initial market research revealed that, for both independent and guided walkers, the quality of accommodation was the most important driver of demand. Feedback (from asking initial walkers what was the most important factor in choosing the Three Capes Track) seems to reinforce that. Equal first (62 per cent) were 'The length of each day's walk seemed achievable' and 'I could stay in comfortable accommodation each night'. In the light of the negative feedback from some bushwalkers, the Tasmania Parks and

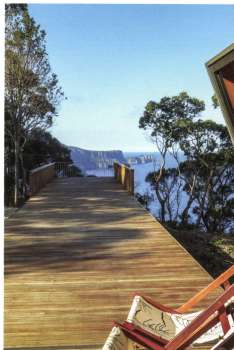
Wildlife Service has also built a new campsite (called Wighalee Falls), and advised that people may still walk to Cape Pillar from Fortescue Bay via the old Cape Pillar Track; with the option to return via Cape Huay to Fortescue Bay or via the old Cape Pillar track (provided they have a Park Pass). Both Cape Huay and Cape Raoul are also available as day walk destinations. The purchase of the Three Capes Track ticket includes a pass to visit the Port Arthur Historic Site, valid for two years.

THE WALK

I joined the walk in early February, after driving from Hobart to the Port Arthur



Clockwise from left: 1. Leaving Retakunna to climb Mt Fortescue on the final day. 2. Dining al fresco at Munro huts. 3. Observation deck at Munro huts. Photos: Keren Lavelle



Historic Site to register. The first stage of Day 1 of the walk is boarding a Pennicott Wilderness catamaran for a 75-minute tour of the harbour focusing on Port Arthur's southern shore, down towards Cape Raoul. As we set off, our guide and skipper, Finn Mooney, took us past the Isle of the Dead where hundreds of convicts from the penitentiary at Port Arthur were buried upright, while the 'upper classes' scored headstones. Next we passed Puer Point ('puer' being Latin for boy), which housed Australia's first juvenile detention facility – an attempt to quarantine youth from Port Arthur's adult convicts and to teach them useful skills.

As we followed along the harbour's southern edge, Mooney drew our attention to the cliffs of 250- to 270-million-year-old Permian mudstone, with their sea caves, fronds of giant kelp waving in the sea at their base, the massive sandhills of Crescent

Bay, and the wildlife – black-faced cormorants, swallows, gannets – and a tree home to a huge sea eagle nest, and nearby, sitting on a branch, a white-bellied sea eagle watching the sea.

Eventually the catamaran switched back to cross the harbour. Mooney noticed a seal frolicking and cut the engines so we could get closer for a look. The seal had caught a fish, and then suddenly, the sea eagle we'd seen earlier swooped down and stole the fish from the seal's grasp; all much too fast for our cameras.

We landed on the beach at Denman's Cove, which is a good swimming spot. Although the weather was fine, I decided against, and set off on the gently rising track along the eastern shore of Port Arthur. The first thing you encounter is a sculpture heralding the start of the track, followed by a boot wash-down station where you brush down and spray your boots to prevent the introduction

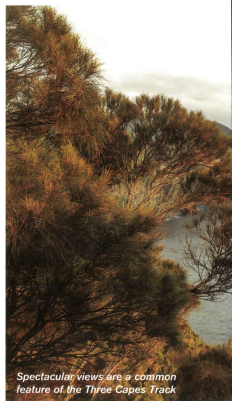
of phytophthora and other soil-borne diseases.

Two key features of the Three Capes Track are the seats installed at vantage points along the way – these points occur either after about an hour's walking or at key viewing spots – and the quality of the track. The seats were all individually designed by second-year furniture design students at the University of Tasmania. Each seat ties in with the interpretive information, relevant to their locations, to be found in the booklet, *Three Capes Track: Encounters on the Edge*. "The state's creative talents have really been brought to bear on this project," says Ben Clark. "It's so much more than a bushwalk – it's a springboard for creativity." The track is mostly one metre wide, constructed of either well-graded gravel abutted by rocks similar to those the nearby terrain, or of treated pine duckboards (sometimes with wire netting), and also





Retakunna hut, the destination on Day 3



Spectacular views are a common feature of the Three Capes Track

features bridges over gullies, and well-constructed steps, either of wooden frames with material packed down, or of rocks cut to fit. It would be virtually impossible to get lost on this track, even in the thickest fog. It's about a two-hour trek from Denman's Cove to the first night's accommodation, Surveyors. I stopped for lunch at the second seat, named '15 Minutes' – not a reference to how much further you have to walk to reach your destination for that evening (the term 'huts' does not do them justice, 'lodge' seems more appropriate) – but a reference

to an early long-range communication system, fun to read about in the Three Capes Track booklet.

The track rises gently along a ridge, with good views of the harbour. The vegetation is mostly a coastal heath with some tree cover. I encountered a tiger snake, one metre long, on the track, but sure enough, it moved out of the way. The trees got taller around Surveyors Cove, a narrow, rocky beach. It's not long, however, before you arrive at the Surveyors huts.

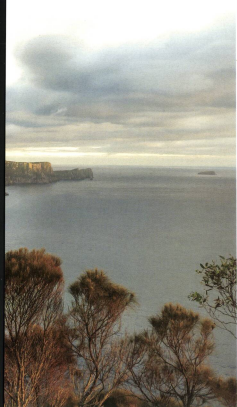
Built of fine-grained Tasmanian timbers, the

huts are beautiful, and well designed, with cross-ventilation, slatted screen doors, and bay windows. They have expansive decks and kitchen areas, one with a library reference section, yoga mats and board-games. The sleeping quarters have four or eight-bed bunks with good, thick mattresses. The TPWS 'host rangers' greet you and have a list ready, advising you which bunkroom is yours to share for the night. A maximum of 48 walkers are allowed on the track each day; everyone must walk on to the next night's hut in the morning.



Host wardens rotate their shifts between huts. Right: Strategically placed seating is provided for lunch and rest stops along the route.





We all set off before 10am the next morning on Day 2, for an 11-kilometre, four- to four-and-a-half-hour walk. "The highest biodiversity on the track is to be found

between Surveyors huts and Arthurs Peak," Patterson-Cloudsdale had told us at his briefing, "with six different ecosystems in the first two hours." As well, there are some great viewing spots on the way to Arthurs Peak (312 metres high). The philosophy behind this walk is not to fence off the cliff edges, but to rely on walkers' sense of self-preservation (except at the Cape Haug lookout, which is fenced due to large groups of day-trippers).

We walked past eucalypt forests, moorlands and then patches of cloud forest, with Gondwanaland species such mosses, lichens and as pineapple candle-heath. After dropping your pack at Munro, you can go on other short walks the host ranger knows of. First things first, however: there is the opportunity to enjoy a bush shower, hauling a bucket aloft.

Day 3 involves a 17-kilometre walk, but the first 14 kilometres of it is done with only a day pack – two hours out to The Blade, a rock feature at the end of Cape Pillar, and the same back, along extensive duckboard tracks and steps. My Day 3 dawned cloudy and misty, and although I knew I was walking close to cliff edges, only mere glimpses of the views were possible.

I climbed up the Blade, a 262-metre slice of dolerite, gazed at Tasman Island, with its steep

sides, and imagined what life would be like in a lighthouse keeper's cottage. Eating lunch at the 'seal spa' seats nearby, you can see (and hear) a seal colony at the island's base.

After collecting your backpack at Munro, it is only a three-kilometre walk through scrub and forest, to the last hut, Retakunna, overlooking a button-grass plain near the foot of Mount Fortescue.

Day 4 starts early, with a 250-kilometre climb up a south-facing slope to reach the top of Mount Fortescue. Carry more than two litres of water if it's a hot day. Ancient rainforest species flourish in these cool and frequently wet conditions. The track continues along the cliff edge with spectacular views back towards Cape Pillar.

At the junction, 'Only Here', ditch your pack and climb steep stone steps to Cape Haug. After rejoining the track, it's not far to the impeccably gorgeous beach at Fortescue Bay. I really enjoyed my swim here before having to catch the Pennicott bus back to Port Arthur.

Kem Levelle is a freelance writer and photographer, based in Sydney, who has been bushwalking since she was six years old. She enjoys multi-day walks, especially through varied landscapes, and has done such walks in Australia, New Zealand and Japan. Next on her horizon is some hedonistic hiking in Italy.

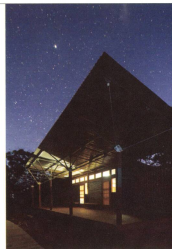


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Slender tree-fern *Cyathea cunninghamii*

Ferns fascinate us for many reasons, and one is surely their uncanny combination of resilience and delicacy. No fern embodies this more than the slender tree-fern (*Cyathea cunninghamii*). This fern is the tallest in Australia, with a crown of fine lacy fronds on a black trunk that stands up to 20 metres tall. Despite this height, the trunk is only about 15 centimetres in diameter, much narrower than the other tree ferns that grow beneath it. The slender tree-fern is so outrageously lanky that it seems impossible it could survive in real life, and it seems likely it might pay for its extravagance by being pushed over by the slightest puff of wind.

Slender tree-fern does indeed shelter from the wind. It grows in the deep cool rainforest gullies of Victoria and Tasmania, near to the coast, and in high altitude forest in southern Queensland. Oddly, despite its size and conspicuousness, it was only confirmed to occur in New South Wales in 1999, and only a single individual is known in that state.

The lifecycle of the slender tree-fern is very different from our own, and requires a sheltered damp environment to run its course. We animals, and most other plants, spend our lives with a double set of chromosomes, which carry our genetic material. This double set is fleetingly halved when we produce sperm and eggs (or, pollen and ovules in flowering plants, collectively termed 'gametes'), which soon come together to produce the beginnings of a new individual with a full double chromosome set. In ferns, the gametes have a life of their own. They live on the forest floor for an extended period as a separate plant from the parents.

Tree-fern spores are produced by the fronds of the adult mother plant. A spore may germinate and form a new plant, utterly independent from its mother, and not even remotely similar in appearance. This 'prothallus' is a tiny, flat heart-shaped plant that resembles a lichen or a liverwort. Like human eggs and sperm, it carries only a single chromosome set. After a few weeks, or maybe months, the prothallus produces gametes, which are clones of itself. Like sperm, these gametes are free swimming, and when conditions are right they make a furtive journey through a film of moisture on the forest floor, until they meet with another gamete, and combine to form a new baby fern with a double chromosome set. It is this little fern, which eventually rises to the top of the forest, and provides a fibrous trunk for other forest ferns and mosses to grow and find some light. It is not known how fast they grow, nor how old the tall giants are, but it has been reported that it takes 20-30 years for slender tree-ferns to begin spore production.

The private life of the slender tree-fern has one more surprise. Occasionally, a gamete wanders onto the prothallus of a different tree-fern species (the very common rough tree-fern), and produces a hybrid fern: the spectacular and enigmatic skirted tree-fern. This species is even more rare than its slender parent, but with a much larger crown, and a huge black trunk that often retains its spent fronds hanging around it like a grass skirt. The skirted tree-fern is sterile, and it represents a reproductive dead end.

Is the slender tree-fern coming to a dead end? In Tasmania it is listed as 'endangered' under that state's Threatened Species Protection Act 1995. It is listed as threatened under Victoria's Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988, and is considered 'vulnerable' in that state. In Queensland, the species is listed as 'near threatened' under the Nature Conservation Act 1992. A drying climate with more extreme hot days and the increasing intensity and frequency of fires, which kill many slender tree-ferns, are considered threats.



Slender tree-ferns are notable for their slim trunks. This example was photographed at Kallista, Victoria.
Photo: Dr Ross Peacock

These threats may all be exacerbated by inappropriate logging practices that expose forest gullies to fire, heat and wind. It is indeed hard to imagine such a delicate and specialised species being a good survivor.

Thankfully, history provides some hope. Tree ferns have been remarkably resilient survivors, despite all of the past upheavals in the Earth's climate. Tree ferns of the family to which slender tree-fern belongs (Cyatheaceae) appear in the fossil record 150 million years ago, well before any of the familiar families of flowering plants. The slender tree-fern can also travel. It is found not only in Australia, but also in New Zealand, where it is considered quite secure, and possibly in New Caledonia. This is one of the curiosities of tree-ferns: while their lifecycle requires a special damp place to shelter the plants, their minute spores are released high in the forest, and can travel far in the atmosphere to colonise new homes.

If you want to see a slender tree-fern, you can find them at home in the Tarra Bulga National Park near Yarram in eastern Victoria, where many fine, tall specimens can be seen from the road. A few examples of both slender and skirted tree-ferns also occur in Sherbrooke Forest and Kallista, right on Melbourne's suburban doorstep, where they can be seen from the Sassafra Creek Walking Trail. Tree-fern identification can be technical, but slender tree-ferns are relatively easy to pick by their thin black trunks with pale-coloured scales.

Steve Sinclair is a plant ecologist and keen naturalist who lives in Melbourne. He has grown ferns since he was at school.

Curious about a plant or animal you've spotted?
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Bob Brown's green living

Following in the footsteps of the latest crop of tourism industry voices, Bob Brown offers some fresh ideas to spur interest in this satire, which originally appeared in *The Mercury*

MACCHIATO ON THE MOUNTAIN

Premier Hodgman should license a decent coffee shop atop Federation Peak.

But first he will need to do something about a lack of clientele as fewer than 100 people get to the 1225-metre top each year. While Federation Peak (1949) was climbed before Mount Everest (1953), these days many more mountaineers get to the top of Everest than to the top of Federation.

Fedder, as it is known in global bushwalking circles, is arguably wilder than Everest and one of the wildest peaks on the globe. It is hard to get to. For a green-shoe, coffee-shop developer in this age of conquering wildness, it is self-evident that a road, rail or, at least, dry-boot track is needed.

Perhaps Sir Edmund Hillary felt the peak's remoteness when he saw its soaring cliffs after conquering Everest and reputedly commented Federation is Australia's only real mountain.

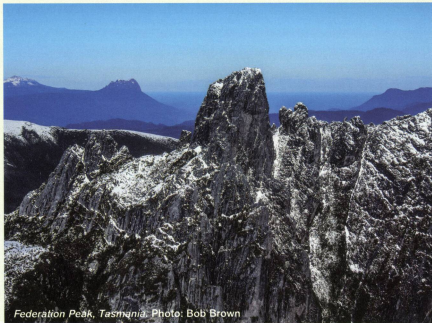
The peak was named by that marvellous tigerskin-cap wearing explorer Thomas Moore, who walked past it in our year of federation, 1901.

Getting to the top of Fedder is tough, coffee or not. You need a gut of steel. When I was first led up around the exposed southeast corner on our way to the top in January 1973, I seized. My legs began shaking and knees knocked. It took me 20 minutes, leaning against the rock wall, to recover. I had made the mistake of looking down: Lake Geeves is 500 metres below. Straight down. There are no handrails or trees to hang on to. It is terrifying.

New Zealand mountaineer Sir Edmund Hillary said the peak was Australia's only real mountain while visiting Tasmania in 1960.

Yet any successful cafe needs hundreds of customers a day, let's say 300. That's about 10,000 a year.

A starting point could be a heliport at Hanging Lake on the high hump west of the peak. In winter Hanging Lake is frozen, but in summer, after a downpour, the waters from the lake drop straight over the cliff to Lake Geeves below. From the heliport a spiral staircase could be rigged up around the tower of the peak, three or



Federation Peak, Tasmania. Photo: Bob Brown

four circuits, to take those who don't get dizzy with heights up to their cappuccinos. This infrastructure strapped on the outside of Federation Peak could be sold as our wild-side version of Paris's Pompidou Centre.

But helicopters cost. For cheaper mass-access the government would need to run a dry-boot track from Huonville to Lake Geeves. It would elevate customers over the miles of mountainsides, bogs, bauera gullies and horizontal-choked ravines through which so many hardy bushwalkers have slugged to Fedder in the last century. Even so, it would require four nights, minimum, in the wilds: and there's no good getting 10,000 dry-booters or high-heelers on their way to a Federation Peak coffee if they can't also enjoy hot showers, warm shelter with Wi-Fi, and a good glass of red, on the way. Then there's Lake Geeves. It would be an awesome climb from the lake up to the coffee-crowned top of Fedder, equivalent to climbing up the stairs of two Empire State buildings. An elevator?

A downside is the lake is on the wrong or southern aspect of the peak. It is mostly in shade in one of the wettest places in Australia. Talk about cold. And that scrub is some of the thickest on Earth. Another

problem is, having got to Lake Geeves, no matter how much you look up, you can't actually see Federation's peak – it's around the back on the sunnier north side. Provided the Government doesn't scrimp on world-class access, the 10,000 would, when they arrived atop, get a 360-degree panorama of one of the world's greatest wildernesses. The coffee shop would be a natural monopoly as there is not room for two. It could be on sold for a motza.

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www.themercury.com.au/news/opinion/talking-point-macchiato-on-the-mountain/news-story/063fb4f38673b7570536ea5713d45899



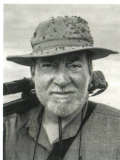
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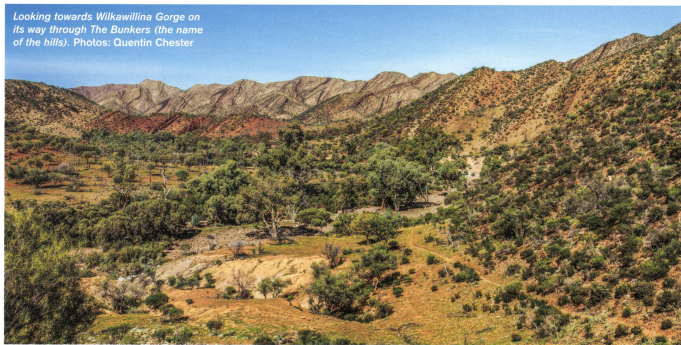
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Walks in a name?

In an exploration of place and language, **Quentin Chester** describes how contemporary adventurers benefit from a landscape brimming with cultural memory

Looking towards Wilkawillina Gorge on its way through The Bunkers (the name of the hills). Photos: Quentin Chester



The carpark is a dustbowl. Nearby, a dry creek bed weaves between some old river red gums. There's a walking trail too. It starts out by straggling into eroded gullies and crests of bare, silty dirt. This is tatty, rain-shadow country. It looks extra-terrestrial and anything but promising as a beginning to a bushwalk. However, the stroll in question just happens to be one of my favourites. Before long you reach a saddle and a slender, hidden valley opens up below. Flanked by a sweep of saw-tooth hills, this gorge looks startling, like it's been freshly scooped from the ranges.

It's not just the reveal of the view or the ribs of vivid earth-colour in the exposed geology. Nor is it simply the chance to slip quietly into the sheltered ravine beyond. It's not even the fact that this nook is far from the crowds, a self-contained hideaway you're pretty much guaranteed to have all to yourself. No, in truth one of the main reasons I keep coming back is a melodic little word that's also the name of the place: Wilkawillina.

I love the rhythm of these syllables. Wilkawillina seems to resonate with physical

experience of place. That business of stepping downstream, one foot then the next, as you skip from stone to stone. And the tick-tock of Wilkawillina also echoes the act of scanning across the dips and rises in the serrated ridge - the metronomic skyline of the hills themselves. The word has alliterative bounce. There have been times wandering here when this name has turned into a kind of chant or Yoda-ish summons. 'Walker Willina', I think to myself. Keep moving. Gotta get down the gorge. 'Walker-Will-In-A'

This place name is one in a bundle of enduring, expressive Adnyamathanha words that I've grown up with. They evoke areas I've walked in and dreamt about all my life: Patawarta, Weetootla, Bunyerroo, Yakaninna, Oratunga, Italowie, Paralana, Umberatana, Edeowie, Warraweena, Yudnumutana, Terrapinna. And for me all these sites and memories have been grouped under another phrase that freights more than 50 years of backstory: The Flinders Ranges. Or, in local parlance, 'The Flinders'.

But now that's changed. In early 2016 Flinders Ranges National Park was re-named

Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park. When I first saw this - more to the point the stark news headline 'Flinders Ranges Renamed' - it was a bolt from the blue. 'The Flinders' were the words that bound us together as a mob of walkers and climbers. It was the abiding place of dreams and struggles; our deepest friendships and life-long loves. It hums as part of who we are. The academics call this place-identity. At first glance the news of a re-naming was not just messing with history. For a brief instant it felt more like a kick in the head.

The supreme irony is that such moments are a mere trace of what Aboriginal Australians have endured for 250 years. Which is why my second reaction to the news was a sense of gratitude. Ikara is a name that upholds the time-honoured significance of the ranges and Wilpena Pound in particular. In the words of Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association (ATLA) chairman Michael Anderson: "The Pound initially was a meeting place for ceremony, not just for our own groups but [for] other neighbours to come and hold ceremonies to discuss rules for life. It has

always been a significant part of our culture; we maintain Dreamtime stories about the Pound and how it was formed."

Through recent generations the Adnyamathanha people have quietly reasserted their hold over the cultural ancestry of their country. In 2004 the place whitefella bushwalkers knew as 'The Gammons' became the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park. Similarly, the true identity of Wilpena Pound's St Mary Peak – the highest point in the ranges – was revealed as Ngarrli Mudlanha. With that came the news that the summit was crucial to the Adnyamathanha creation story and as such was best left undisturbed.

This twist in the tale echoes one of the most famous re-namings of all. On 15 December 1993 the mighty monolith at the heart of the continent became Ayers Rock/Uluru. Nine years later that was flipped to be Uluru/Ayers Rock. This was so much more than a polite recognition of indigenous ties to homelands. Instead, it is bound to a 40-year-strong affirmation of Anangu communities, language, art and culture.

Uluru used to be a place tourists visited to climb a rock and get a t-shirt. It was a geological oddity we visited on school trips and bus tours. Now Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park is recognised as a pivotal marker in ancestral knowledge that has resonated across Central Australia for thousands of years. Who needs to climb a rock when you have the chance to share in this tradition, walk the country and listen to language and stories like no other?

As such appreciation grows it's almost a relief when some of the more incongruous whitefella names are eased to the sidelines. Poor old Sir Henry Ayers never got within a bull's roar of Uluru. Matthew Flinders might have been an expert navigator but the nearest he got to his eponymous ranges was 20 kilometres away in a rowboat. As for the Gammons, no one has a clue why they are so called, so there's no great loss apart from the comfort of familiarity. Meanwhile, Edward John Eyre might have been the first European to set eyes on the blinding salt expanse 200 kilometres to the northwest of these ranges, yet it feels only proper that the original Arabana identity for such a sublime, spiritual place now takes precedence in the naming of Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre National Park.

There's no exact science to these transactions. It's an expanding, often intricate, discussion about place and identity. Oddities abound. Take Wilpena Pound, for example. The eastern rim has Mount Karawarra, Tumburru Peak, Point Bonny and Iluka Peak. So far, so good. Alas, the west side of Wilpena doesn't fare quite so well. Here,

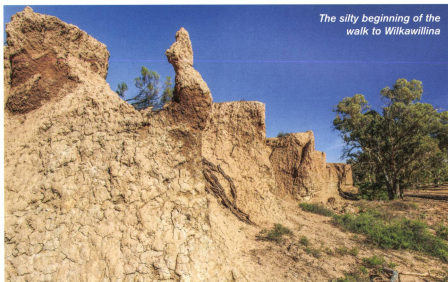
a surveyor in 1895 called the summits after his mates and family. Thus we get Dorothy's Peak, Harold's Peak, Dick's Nob and Fred's Nob. Great views, but the naming is nothing to write home about. I mean, who's going to add a blog entry: 'Climbed to the edge of the Pound and spent a happy hour sitting on Dick's Nob'?

In less remote corners of the country the business of changing place names can get trickier. From the late 1980s there was a government push to restore Gariwerd, the name Jarldwadjali and Djabwurrung people had used for the Grampian Ranges in western Victoria. Strident resistance to the idea from many by non-indigenous locals effectively buried the idea. For some, the Grampians was a tag too tightly bound to family histories, and their sense of self and place. Even the idea of joint naming didn't catch on. As far as the Parks Victoria website is concerned the area is still the Grampians National Park. Gariwerd appears randomly in brackets in the body text, yet sadly without any reference to what the word means or its traditional associations.

These debates become thornier still when

Given the overlapping nature of the nearly 400 Aboriginal language groups and the passage of time, the art of toponymy will always have occasional points of contention. Less convincing are the lazy sods who argue that names like Jaithmathang are too hard to articulate. (FYI it's pronounced Yit-ma-thang.) I still struggle with plenty of place names. My favourite personal challenge is not tripping over my tongue when saying Nooldoonooldoona, a popular Arkaroola waterhole. However, making an effort to learn a few new words feels like the very least we can do for the privilege of being in a continent with the oldest continuous culture on earth.

This has nothing to do with political correctness, just common courtesy. More to the point, when you're rolling around in a gorge like Wilkawillina year after year those syllables begin to stick like the lift of a tune. The name alone doesn't necessarily give me any sudden insight into Adnyamathanha stories. Apart from respecting important cultural sites, I've no interest in imagining I can appropriate indigenous beliefs as my own.



The silty beginning of the walk to Wilkawillina

there is an air of dispute among those claiming an indigenous connection to country. As a young cross-country skier, I spent a few seasons on the Bogong High Plains. A favourite haunt was around Tawonga Huts, skiing the slopes of the Fainters and a lumpy set of granite tops known as the Niggerheads. To be honest we didn't think much about it in the old days but, no matter what the nostalgic skier and cartlemen connections to the place, such labels simply don't pass muster in this millennia. Since 2008 the place has been called Mount Jaithmathang. The trouble is, at the time, not all indigenous groups with a claim on the area accepted this as the most suitable association.

A lot of the time I think it's enough to be in country. Especially if you have a bit of the local lingo in your head. With a vowel-rich place name or two, and the rhythm of being on foot, the land itself connects you to an entire world of experience. Families making a life out here among the rocky hills and waterholes. A thousand generations learning the names. The light of the campfires, the laughter and the songs of place that still echo down the gorge. W

A contributor since Wild issue 3, Quentin Chester is the author of several books about wild places.



quentinchester.com

A sepia-toned photograph of a stone staircase winding through a dense jungle. The path is made of large, flat stones and leads upwards into the thick foliage. The jungle is filled with various types of trees and plants, creating a sense of mystery and adventure.

LOST

in the jungle

Deep in the jungle, a rough-hewn staircase leads up to the remarkable ruins of Ciudad Perdida - The Lost City
Photos: Dan Slater

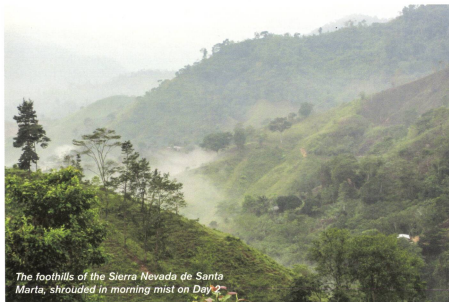
A decade after a group of eight hikers were kidnapped by Colombian guerillas, *Dan Slater* gets a taste for their grueling march through the jungle surrounding Ciudad Perdida – The Lost City

I puff up the final slope. It's humid, and sweat is running off me like the early-morning dew dripping from the leaves of the rainforest. I reach the top of the steps and turn to look out over the ceremonial terracing that comprises the heart of Ciudad Perdida – The Lost City. It's taken us two days to get this deep into the jungle, to where an ancient, pre-Colombian civilisation once thrived, and the view of the ruins, atop a levelled ridge and surrounded by jungled peaks, is just magnificent. I turn to congratulate Dave but he has been replaced by a stern-looking man in combat fatigues holding an automatic rifle. He gestures toward me with the barrel, and smiles.

In September 2003 eight foreign hikers were kidnapped on this very spot by guerrillas from the National Liberation Army (ELN). Ten years after the killing of notorious cartel boss Pablo Escobar, Colombia was just beginning to register on the radar of the most adventurous backpackers. However, the country was still riven by warring factions: the National Armed Forces were fighting various paramilitary and rebel groups such as the ELN and FARC – the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. The reasons for the conflict were many and varied, from poverty to communism to politics and drug-running, and over 220,000 civilians are thought to have died so far.

Ciudad Perdida is known as the Machu Picchu of Colombia – a spectacular archaeological site, remnants of a lost civilisation, deep in a forbidding mountain range. The mountains in this case are the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, the highest coastal mountain range in the world topping out at 5700 metres at the summit of Pico Simon Bolivar. Established in 1964, the National Natural Park is a sanctuary for flora and fauna, as well as home to 30,000 indigenous peoples of the Kogi, Arhuaco, Kankuamo and Wiwa cultures.

Our trek started three days previously in the coastal city of Santa Marta, where we were collected from our hostel and taken to the offices of Expotur, one of only four companies registered to run tours into the mountains. Their most popular trip is the



The foothills of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, shrouded in morning mist on Day 2

four-, five- or six-day hike to Ciudad Perdida, each option following the same 46.6-kilometre route and costing the same 600,000 pesos – about \$250. Although unconstrained by time, Dave and I had chosen the four-day walk because we figured the longer options meant a slower pace with more breaks, and we like walking, not waiting.

Colombia is a wonderful country – huge, mountainous and friendly, and more varied than you imagine. Quite separate from the Sierra Nevada, the Andes run the length of the country and there are beaches galore on both Caribbean and Pacific coasts. The country's southeast corner is within the amazon basin and still home to undiscovered tribes. After more than 50 years of conflict the country is finally opening up again to visitors. While the fighting continues – FARC and ELN are still active – it is mostly away from tourist areas and the Sierra Nevada has been declared safe since 2005, when trekking resumed.

That first morning we were loaded into jeeps and driven a couple of hours to the small trailhead town of Machete, an eerie name for a remote, peaceful village, where we ate a brief lunch while our guide organised the mules and muleteers to transport our food

GETTING THERE AND AROUND

- Flights to Colombia are quickest through LA and would most likely go to Bogota or Medellin. From there you can get an internal flight or 16 hr bus to Santa Marta.
- There are only four companies licensed to operate tours to Ciudad Perdida: Turcol, Expotur, Guías y Baquianos Tour and Wiwa Tour (the only indigenous-owned agency). We booked with Expotur after some Internet research as they were the only company that openly advertised the 4-day option and replied promptly to an email. The cost was COP 600,000 (\$250) for either 4, 5 or 6 days, with 5 days being the most popular option.
- There is plenty of accommodation in Santa Marta. We stayed at Drop Bear hostel, an Australian-owned mansion that used to house a drug cartel.
- Food on trek is plentiful and reasonably tasty but take your own snacks in case. Expect scrambled egg, chicken stew, rice, lots of fruit, with soft drinks and beer for sale up to COP 4000 (\$1.70).

along the track. We observed with interest some groups just finishing their trek – did they look relieved, scared or bored? On the contrary: loud, sweaty and muddy they downed their cold cervezas in the sun, laughing and reminiscing.

For the first day, Dave and I had been lumped in with a larger group who were doing the five-day tour and we were soon tramping out of town behind our guide, Miguel. The track was wide and the foliage quite open as we strode steadily uphill, across a couple of shallow rivers and into the jungle.

Farmhouses nestled in the misty valleys, surrounded by cultivated land, most of the inhabitants being mestizo farmers of mixed blood descent. Miguel told us of a local farmer who found millions of USD hidden in the forest. He was so scared that he told the local paramilitaries; they took it all, leaving him with just one million pesos and a length of rope should he wish to hang himself. Nevertheless, it all seemed so – peaceful.

.....
Ten years previously, the kidnapped hikers were woken in the night and told that two tourists had been killed further along the track, and that the army would be escorting them to safety. In fact, the ELN guerrillas marched them hundreds of kilometres deeper into the mountains, forcing them to walk for 15 hours at a time on a diet of rice, yucca and cane sugar. With only sheets of plastic under which to sleep, this was a somewhat more extreme trek than the one for which they had signed up.

On the other end of the scale, our group stopped repeatedly for small breaks, snacks of pineapple, maracuya (passionfruit) or lulo (tree tomato), or to swim in cool river pools. After about three hours we reached the first 'trail lodge' – a basic, open-sided shelter strung with hammocks and mosquito nets. There were basic toilets and showers, and long dining benches gathered at the kitchen end of the tin roof, where we sat for a wildlife lecture.

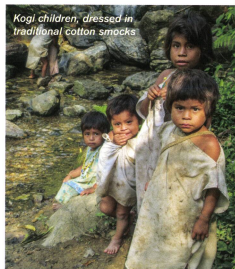
Miguel gave us an idea of what birds and animals we might see if we looked closely. Due to its isolation from the Andes, the Sierra Nevada has developed distinct flora and fauna. Orchids carpet the forest floor; blue morpho and mariposa butterflies add colour to the air. There are jaguar, tapir, brocket deer and red-tailed squirrels, and the trees are alive with toucan, condor, hummingbirds and parrots. Mosquitos are rampant and carry yellow fever, a point of interest to Dave seeing as he could not have that vaccination due to a previous long-term medication. He remained philosophical though: "Apart from the fever, vomiting, jaundice, kidney failure and bleeding from every orifice," he pondered, "what's the worst that can happen?"

We were woken at 5am on the second day, scheduled to walk eight hours to catch up with the group that left the day before us. While delighted at the prospect of going at a decent clip, it meant being abandoned by the knowledgeable Miguel in favour of a gangly youth called Jerry – a kitchen boy. "Why must we start so early?" I asked him, blearily. "Es muy lejo," answered Jerry. "It's very far." In fact it was only 16 kilometres, which made us glad we were not expected to drag it out over two days.

After some steep and heavily-used tracks, which must have turned into mud chutes after a few minutes of rain, we were strolling through sun-dappled glades with mossy trees and chirping birdlife. "Is that a scarlet-fronted parakeet, or a crimson-backed tanager?" I asked Dave. "I dunno," he replied, "which way is it facing?" We would certainly have benefitted from Miguel's toucan-spotting abilities here. Jerry was good value ("I drink 10 beers while wait in Machete," he boasted to us, "and now I sweating alcohol!") but most of the day we were alone as he rushed off ahead or lingered behind to chat to mates.

Our path passed a Kogi village of circular, stone huts inhabited by chickens, pigs and ducks. The Kogi are direct descendants of the native Tairona people who inhabited Ciudad Perdida until its abandonment nearly 400

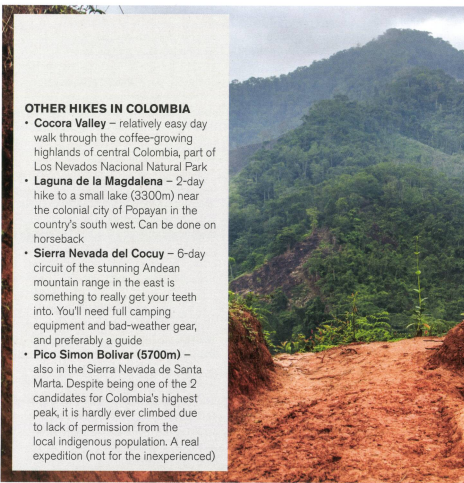
years ago. When the conquistadors arrived in the early 16th Century they chased the Tairona from their coastal settlements, forcing them to take refuge high in the Sierra Nevada. This isolation protected them for the next century but eventually Spanish settlers encroached further inland and clashes were inevitable. The tale is a familiar one: eventually the Tairona chiefs were sentenced to death, their villages burned and populations scattered. A group of children, dressed in white, cotton smocks, jet-black hair roughly trimmed, peer out at us. They stare silently; not shy, but



Kogi children, dressed in traditional cotton smocks

OTHER HIKES IN COLOMBIA

- **Cocora Valley** – relatively easy day walk through the coffee-growing highlands of central Colombia, part of Los Nevados Nacional Natural Park
- **Laguna de la Magdalena** – 2-day hike to a small lake (3300m) near the colonial city of Popayan in the country's south west. Can be done on horseback
- **Sierra Nevada del Cocuy** – 6-day circuit of the stunning Andean mountain range in the east is something to really get your teeth into. You'll need full camping equipment and bad-weather gear, and preferably a guide
- **Pico Simon Bolivar (5700m)** – also in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. Despite being one of the 2 candidates for Colombia's highest peak, it is hardly ever climbed due to lack of permission from the local indigenous population. A real expedition (not for the inexperienced)



curious. The Kogi live in the same simple way as they have for centuries, growing crops (cocoa beans, bananas, yucca) and raising cattle up in the clouds. The men keep coca leaves in their small, woven man-bags and chew continuously. This connects them with the earth and enables them to walk for days at a time without hunger or exhaustion.

During the abductees' forced march, one British man managed to escape his captors by dashing down a steep slope, falling numerous times, and hiding until the soldiers had given up searching. "There is no need to get him," shrugged the rebel leader, "the tigers will." Usually native to India, legend has it that one tiger roams these forests, reputed to have been released from Pablo Escobar's Medellín zoo after his death. Fortunately though, after 12 days alone, the escapee found his way to an indigenous village where they called the real army. Meanwhile, the rest of the group were taken further into the wilderness. Our visit coincided with Semana Santa, or Holy Week - the week before Easter and the largest holiday in Catholic Latin America. This is the park's busiest time of year and Camp 3, Paraiso (Paradise) with a regular capacity of 30, had to accommodate over 100 hikers - Colombian, English, Dutch, French and American. Hammocks swung bum-to-bum and washing filled every available line. The

The author negotiates the muddy trails near the beginning of the trek



kitchen seemed to be dishing out chicken and mashed potato on a rotating basis and random bodies were sleeping, chatting or bathing down in the Buritaca River. Kogi women and children hung around the camp waiting to dine on the leftover food. I wished we could interact better with these people but we shared no common tongue and most of the guides were Mestizo - a completely different culture. Even the international language of pulling faces at babies evoked no reaction.

Juan, our new guide, advised us that the group we were supposed to join had gone up to the ruins this afternoon, having unsurprisingly arrived in plenty of time. All the better for us - it meant we'd have him to ourselves tomorrow. After an uncomfortable night of bumping hips with neighbouring swingers and the loud 'whoop, whoop' of tree frogs, we rose with the sun. Juan took us the last kilometre along the river to the start of the 1200 steps - the steep ascent necessary to reach Ciudad Perdida.

The Lost City, actually called Teyuna, is believed to have been first inhabited from about 800AD, some 650 years earlier than Machu Picchu. Once the region's political and manufacturing centre, Teyuna remained overgrown and lost to all but the local indigenous population from the 17th Century until 'discovered' by looters in 1972. All the gold artefacts were stolen at this time and grave-robbars frequently killed each other over rich pickings before the authorities were alerted. Archaeological interest was triggered when artefacts from the culture began appearing for sale in Santa Marta's markets, and the site centre was fully excavated and partially reconstructed by 1982.

The city is characterised by circular structures, of which there are over 200 spread around the 30-acre site. They are built on terraces and connected via a series of contour paths and steep stairways. The foundations, some of which have been cleared and their retaining walls rebuilt, represent homes, plazas, storage areas and ceremonial buildings. With a population of approximately 2000 people, Teyuna was only the main town of the Tairona; numerous other small settlements lie undisturbed in the surrounding jungle.

As we explored the various dwellings, Juan explained aspects of the Tairona culture, in Spanish. We had specified an English-speaking guide because our language skills were, shall we say, limited, so we missed a lot of detail. Well, all the detail. "I like a bit of mystery with my Lost Cities, generally," commented Dave, "but this is ridiculous." While not quite matching the stature of the Incan city of Machu Picchu, Teyuna culminated in a magnificent central terrace, the last section to be built and featuring the

most elaborate and complex stonework. Certainly a place of ceremonial or religious significance, the top of the ridge is built up to a circular plateau that stands proudly above the surrounding jungle, swirling in the mist. It was while hiking up to a viewpoint over the plaza that I encountered the gun-toting youth. Thoughts of ELN and FARC guerrillas flashed through my brain: "This is supposed to be safe - my wife is going to kill me!" I needn't have worried though - the soldier's smile was genuine and he just wanted to shake my hand. The Colombian military now have a permanent settlement at the ruins to prevent a repeat of the kidnapping, and camping here is no longer allowed. After the daring escape, the remaining seven hostages were held at a base deep in the mountains while the guerrillas demanded an investigation into human rights abuses. They claimed that government-backed paramilitaries had been attacking peasants in the mountains. Days grew into weeks and months as an international team investigated the reports, and it was only after 102 days that the ELN released the hikers unharmed. With the guerrillas now absent from the Sierra Nevada de Marta, La Ciudad Perdida is now safe for anyone to enjoy. As I posed for a photo clutching my new friend's rifle, I reflected that, although I would have loved to spend more time hiking here, 15 hours a day for three months might have been pushing it. As Jerry would have said: 'Es muy lejor!' [W](#)



Dan is a dromomaniac - afflicted with an uncontrollable urge to wander. His journeys are generally undertaken by foot, bicycle, kayak or gravity. Between outdoor articles he has managed to knock out a couple of travel books and a faux gear review blog.



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Manoeuvring between dead, white stringybark trees. Photos: Mikhail Zenon

Floating through silent sentinels

Captivated by the secluded magic of Morton National Park, *Andrea Purnomo* paddles around Lake Yarrunga on a multi-day kayak and camping adventure

We've been here many times before and every time is nothing short of magical. The changing waters, the quiet company, and the colossal gorge that keeps reminding you of your relative position in the world. We found ourselves back in NSW's Morton National Park's Lake Yarrunga, the home of Tallowa Dam and around 344 species of plants. Nestled near both the Wingello and Meryla State Forests, Lake Yarrunga welcomed us with its vibrant display of painted greens sandwiched between blues skies. Its surrounding forests – our home for three nights – provided us with privacy and protection with its thick-based trees dominating us in an embrace. A stark difference from the vulnerability we felt whilst on the water. Through the ever-wide gorge we manoeuvred through during silent days.

Lake Yarrunga gives you the feeling of being somewhere remote, though geographically it is quite the opposite. Located near Kangaroo Valley, it is only forty minutes away from Nowra and one-and-a-half hours from Wollongong. We were stuck in traffic near Kangaroo Valley, joined the line of cars like crawling ants on our way down to Tallowa Dam and parked our kayak-carrying-4WD among the others, closing the car park from any more late parkers. We sailed away from all the people, cars and traffic and started on rough waters towards the dam then south-westward into secluded water bends. As part of the Shoalhaven Scheme, Tallowa Dam was constructed in the mid-1970s from plans dating back to the end of

World War I. It was built as a long-term water supply for the Sydney and Illawarra reserves, feeding water into the Warragamba and Upper Nepean Dams when levels drop to 75 percent. It was the solution to the prediction that the Warragamba Dam would not be able to meet Sydney's water supply demands by the mid-1970s. The sheer importance of this dam is the reason for Yarrunga's

dramatic scenery. The trees that have been stripped and abandoned from its soil for the diversion of water are left bare like mangled sculptures, twisting and reaching out of the water throughout the lake. We paddled 4.2 kilometres past the dam and came across a kilometre-long liquid tree graveyard of coachwood (*Ceratopetalum apetalum*). It's exposed grey bark illuminated by the dense green imposing vegetation



behind them - a before and after shot. Usually living for centuries, these coachwood can grow to an impressive forty metres in height. Coachwoods, Sydney peppermints (*Eucalyptus piperita*), and brown barrels (*Eucalyptus fastigata*) flutter in harmony along each side as we made our way 7.8 kilometres down towards where the rapids began and where our kayaks will not be able to take us further. We paddled alone through a mammoth gorge of leafy layers with bronze and red rocky-mountains looming over. The scene was so vast we looked like specks as the terrain consumed us. We passed by sandbanks the colour of wood till we reached the end of the lake where the water bank was enclosed by abounding distinctive stones like the jagged teeth of a water monster. A route that looked extremely enjoyable for a different time with different gear. We made our way back as the daylight transformed into its copper stages. The moving water absorbed the circumferential greenery, till we were floating alone on deep green water. Lake Yarrunga's calm and remoteness is entirely due to its motor watercraft ban allowing kayakers, canoes, small sail crafts and stand up paddle boarders the freedom to explore the lake

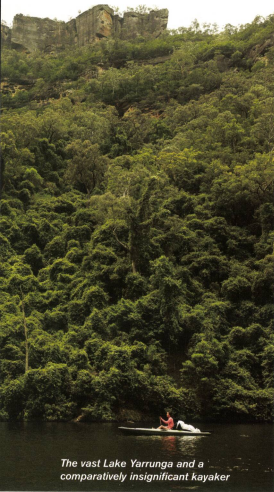


Warming up with dinner and drinks

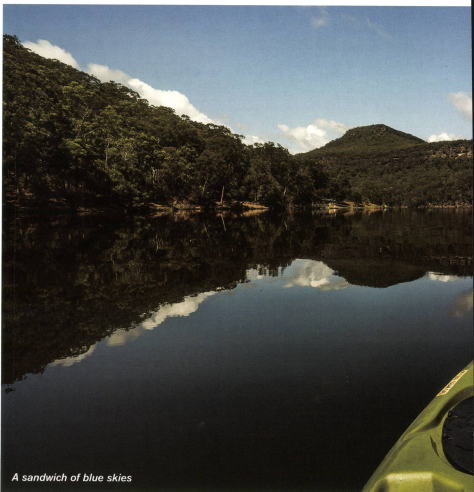


What could be better than lake views and a small fire at a secluded campsite?

without noise and oil pollution. The perpetual silence is eerie but enriching, with the echo of birds and the crackle of trees breaking the silence. It seemed we were the only people on Lake Yarrunga. Though there are a few designated campsites found along the water bank for remote camping, paddlers can choose to camp anywhere their tents allow them. A small piece of land flanked by solid Sydney peppermint trees would be our home for the night. As one of the most common eucalyptus trees in Sydney, its leaves has a distinct menthol smell when crushed and is known to be more toxic than it's English counterpart, the English peppermint. We tied our kayaks around one of its thick fibrous bases and set up camp within their protection. Feeling guilty for disturbing the serenity, we sliced through the static water manoeuvring our kayaks as silently as possible. Brown thornbills (*Acanthiza pusilla*) playfully tumbled and weaved past us like duo figure skaters, and a kangaroo taking a replenishing break to our left spots us and scampers, pushing through the thick vegetation. We saw our first sight of people on our way back, which continued on to another eight kayakers thereafter. There is



The vast Lake Yarrunga and a comparatively insignificant kayaker



A sandwich of blue skies

always an unspoken sense of camaraderie on the water. A nod, wave or smile shared between paddle-passbyers, yet ignored when passing through the city. We noticed signs of imminent rain from the shadowy clouds and prepared ourselves as best as we could. The rain cascaded upon us, and after an hour of paddling we were in the thick of the torrent. We paddled through the downpour for hours, alone once again. The green water moved with the impact of army droplets, and the trees murmured to the rain and wind. It was cold, but refreshing. There was movement, but it was still. We reached the Tallowa Dam picnic area in time to set up camp during a dry break and enjoyed the sounds from a dry bed. The trees northeast of Tallowa Dam looked different. They stood taller and slimmer as the lake bent towards the Meryla State Forest and Kangaroo River a further 16.23 kilometres upstream. We paddled past fishermen nestled comfortably by the lake bed, or floating stationary in content; past campers preparing for their day, or enjoying their morning coffee. There were two main campsites in this area of the lake, with one housing its own private remote toilet. We paddled through

unbroken calm green water where fish caused ripples in sections of the lake. We were surrounded by taller eucalyptus Sydney peppermint and sizable grey gum trees (*Eucalyptus punctata*). As its name suggests the grey gum stands out amongst the greenery, grey and almost white in colour contrast. Though this colouring suggests that these trees are merely over one year of age, the grey gum can live for over hundreds of years, regenerating from the base and branches from bushfire devastation. We passed large tree ferns (*Cyathea* sp.) draping multiple-pinnate stems over the water's edge like a woman's hair falling over her face as she takes a drink. Left into another section of the lake, we found ourselves in a calm belt with a mountain cave atop the overgrown greenery, and skimmed above drowned giant tree branches and tree-ferns evoking a scene from Jurassic Park. The sun finally revealed itself through awning clouds and instantaneously illuminated our surroundings. Our green lake disappeared before our eyes and the water transformed into the blue sky. We floated through skies and sailed through clouds. The lake parted two ways lined with another dramatic

graveyard of grey trees stretching for 2.5 kilometres in both directions. White stringybark (*Eucalyptus globoides*) etched on their tombstones. Lined throughout the lake, they contorted like stone gargoyles expressing their anguished stories. Trees left isolated from their former selves, now living with spiders that spun their homes amongst their branches. The stringed bark texture added to the dilapidated, but fascinating display. A sombre scene of life and death. The value of experiencing such landscapes in silence brings forth the importance of reflection and contemplation while in the wild. No sounds of motors or horns are found, just the occasional echo of social occasions. It is in this silence, within this gorge amongst forests and waterways one can see that life and death together can create a truly beautiful scene. This is the magic of Lake Yarrunga. [W](#)

Preferring to spend her time on unfamiliar ground and on the water, *Andrea* is an adventure enthusiast and published travel writer. Her works can be found in various magazines and online publications.



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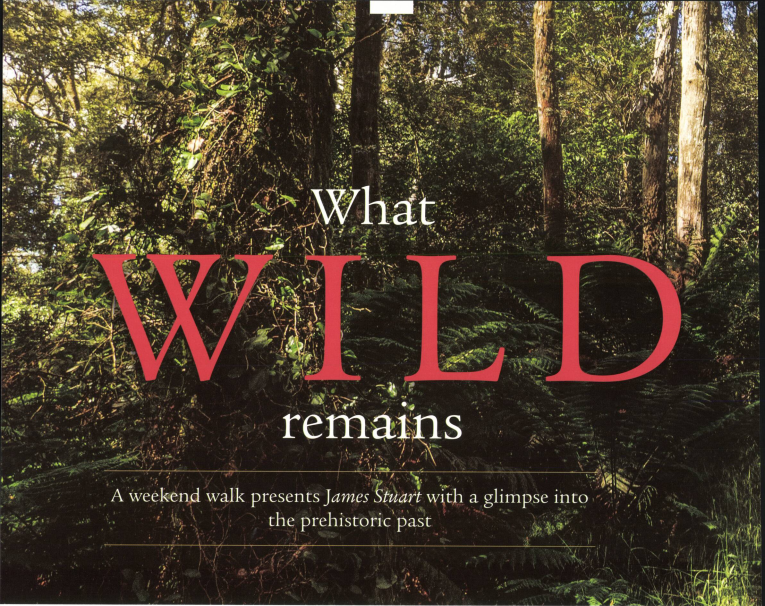
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What WILD remains

A weekend walk presents *James Stuart* with a glimpse into the prehistoric past

Like an island forest, the Barrington Tops wilderness rises steeply from the plains of the upper Hunter Valley. On high peaks and plateaus, snow and mountain gums stand alongside sub-alpine swamps and grasslands. This is a wilderness where ancient Antarctic beech tower over temperate rainforest gullies. Creeks and rivers rush down through these gullies and join river systems that feed the towns, farms and mining leases surrounding the plateau. That Barrington Tops remains a refuge for ancient trees and pristine waterways in the midst of these clear-felled landscapes is a consequence of geology as much as of conservation. Plans to transform it into a tourist development in the 1930s (the 'Katoomba or Kosciuszko of the north') never eventuated thanks to steep slopes and inconsistent snowfall. It's hard to get there, even if you happen to live right next door. You can't live much closer than my parents-in-law Tom and Pip's native timber plantation, Bindera, just northwest of the old farming town of Gloucester. Despite that, it took close to two hours for us to wind our way towards Little Murray Campground, a remote site just southeast of the iconic

Polblue Swamp. The dirt roads were muddy and slippery from recent rainfall, the isolation palpable. Travelling with Tom, Pip and sister-in-law Alice (my partner Jane stayed back at Bindera with our daughter) – Little Murray campground was only the departure point for our first day; our destination was further south: a bush campsite at Wombat Creek. We inched along the rutted 4WD track leading through open, sub-alpine forest, and passed a National Parks ranger setting poison traps for wild dogs and foxes – a reminder that Barrington Tops is very much a wilderness at risk. "You've done well," he said laconically, eyeing our Subaru from the cab of his workhorse ute. Eventually we pulled up at Little Murray, where Tom (neither a keen bushwalker nor camper), left us and bumped his way back to Bindera. Ahead were some 35 kilometres of walking. For the next two days we'd follow old service trails and bush tracks through eucalypts and World Heritage-listed rainforests as we steered down toward Gloucester Tops. The walk was Pip's idea, linking up with one she and Alice had completed four years

earlier. We'd tailored our route to avoid any serious ascents; Pip's fit and healthy but, at 70, doesn't have much time for big climbs. She was also recovering from a badly broken ankle. Accordingly, I was the designated packhorse, carrying tents and most of the shared equipment. As I shouldered my pack, I was thankful for the ongoing investment in lightweight gear.

Snow gums (*Eucalyptus pauciflora*) seemed to arch over the track as we started out; their straight branches and tall crowns, maybe 20 metres up, were nothing like the stunted, wind- and snow-bent trees I'd seen before in the Snowy Mountains high country. We had left behind the sub-alpine swamp surrounding Little Murray, where fan-like black sallie (*Eucalyptus stellulata*) provided shade among snowgrasses.

Up there, high on the plateau, it was developing into a stunning autumn day. We were at 1500 metres and the midday sky was a striking blue, whisked by white clouds that didn't presage the storm forecast for evening.

Hailing from Sydney, I've always associated fire trails with exposed sandstone ridge tops and endless heath. They seem like magnets



Relics from Gondwana: Antarctic beech on the descent from Gloucester Tops
Photos: James Stuart

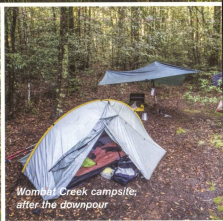
for a tenacious breed of bleached heath. The experience here was utterly different. Enclosed by gums, we followed Barrington Trail, a rough 4WD track that would have swallowed our car, though a few vehicles passed us with a smile and wave from their occupants. Tussocks of snowgrass grew trackside, morphing into an understory of ferns and shrubs.

We shared lunch in dappled shade on a fallen tree, its massive trunk providing a seat for us all. Swayed into afternoon torpor by the cool breeze, we lingered too long and the first of many leeches emerged from their hiding spots. They were tiny specimens, less than a centimetre long, and no doubt in need of a good feed. We didn't oblige, however, flicking them away before they could get to our skin.

The walking was glorious, even without grand vistas. Truth be told, I would have preferred to follow a bush trail, but a *Phytophthora cinnamomi* quarantine zone was in effect, centered on the Watergauge Trail that links Little Murray with Black Swamp. *Phytophthora*, also known as die-back, is a soil-borne water mould that rots the roots of afflicted plants. With no known remediation,



Antarctic beech roots exposed by soil erosion



Wombat Creek campsite, after the downpour

the only strategy for the time being is containment.

"How much plant life would phytophthora kill off in this area before it stopped?" I asked Pip, a GP who is also a botanical expert.

"Do you mean when would it self-arrest?" she asked.

"Yes," I replied. "Like 30 years? Would it fundamentally alter the ecosystem?"

"It already has," came her sobering assessment.

Barrington Tops may have been protected by virtue of its topology, but it's clear that it requires stewardship and respect if it's to survive. Thanks to technology and globalisation humans now knowingly or unwittingly transport species and pathogens

like *phytophthora* from one land mass to the next, just as a bird carries seeds between forests. It's described in Elizabeth Kolbert's alarming book *The Sixth Extinction* as 'New Pangea' whereby the world has effectively become a single super continent again.

At Junction Pools, a popular campsite and picnic area uphill from a series of deep pools in the Barrington River, we came across our first *phytophthora* cleaning station and dutifully scrubbed our boots. We also met a day-tripper from Newcastle, who'd driven up to fish. A large brown trout (*Salmo trutta*) dangled from one hand. It would make a fine dinner, though it's easy to forget about the river species affected by this introduced predator, submerged as they are in unseen waters.



A snow gum stands amid snowgrass near Little Murray campground



And with that, I took off, charging towards Wombat Creek across mostly flat terrain, which dipped only when I finally joined the east-bound Link Trail. From there I was at the fringe of the temperate rainforest that makes up nearly half the park. I arrived at our chosen campsite just as the first raindrops fell. By the time Alice and Pip made it, both tents were up, but the thunderstorm had hit.

With rain hammering down, Alice helped me set up a tarp for the camp kitchen. It was a hack job, but functional enough. A good thing too: Alice was soaked to the bone by the time we huddled underneath to cook dinner while unseen, dark clouds rattled above. "My raincoat was waterproof when I bought it," she shivered. "But that was a long time ago."

Soon enough, we started to warm up. A hot meal and drink followed, though we couldn't get a fire going in the downpour (despite my best designs, the tarp discharged water right down the back of the fireplace). The storm eased after an hour or so, just long enough for us to crawl into tents before the second wave hit.

.....

The first rays of sun in the morning after a storm are like a salve. I watched them extend across the treetops and delicate green moss covering the trunks of our rainforest refuge. As we packed soaking tents and tarp, a rose robin (*Petroica rosea*) flitted from branch to branch above us, its luminescent pink breast startling amidst the shadows. I splashed my face down at Wombat Creek where clear

We forded the river and then made our way toward the day's only noteworthy ascent: Aeroplane Hill, named for a 1940s aircraft crash. The forest changed subtly. Large bushes of the threatened broad-leaved pepperbush (*Tasmannia purpurascens*) emerged from between snow and mountain gums (*E. dalrympleana*), their fruit a bruised purple. Alice and Pip sampled a shrub's small red fruit – an olive berry – but puckered their faces. Emergency food only, they agreed. At Black Swamp, I gazed out over the sedge

grass and sphagnum moss, a textured expanse of green shades. It's only later, reading about this area, that I realised how fragile these ecosystems actually are. However, at that particular moment I was focused on the dark clouds gathering beyond the tree crowns. And then, the unmistakable, distant rumble of thunder. With camp at least an hour away, I turned to my companions. "Reckon I should get a move on, hey?" "I think that would be a good idea," replied Alice.



Huge ferns swallow Pip and Alice as they navigate a rainforest gully

water ran swiftly over rocks and logs, past thickly forested shores.

We'd shared the campsite with a young couple that had walked up the Link Trail from Gloucester Tops. That morning, we were following the same route down – an old, disused 4WD track. Expecting more of the previous day's easy walking, we soon found that wouldn't be the case.

"It's a bit overgrown," the woman remarks as the couple began their return leg. "The grass is waist high in parts. There are some huge ferns too – feels like Gondwanaland." Soon enough the trail dropped into a damp creek gully. Gone were the eucalypts. Instead Antarctic beech (*Nothofagus moorei*) dominates, relics of Australia's pre-history. Ancient and impassive, their trunks collected moss and lichen in the manner of stones. Buttress roots

anchored in the wet soil amid leaf litter, vines and tree ferns.

Only small shards of sunlight hit the muddy path where rivulets, formed from the storm, ran down in channels. Alice disappeared into a mass of ferns ahead and then watched on anxiously as Pip squeezed beneath a recently fallen beech, only to emerge with a big smile. I completely lost my footing on a patch of clay, saved from a rude tumble by trekking poles, which miraculously managed to keep me upright. The potential effect phytophthora might have on those nothofagus is unclear, though there is evidence that the related myrtle beech (*N. cunninghamii*) does suffer from dieback. I hope that enough care is paid by visitors to ensure we never find out. In retrospect, this soil would be the perfect

breeding ground for a water-borne mould. It took an age to push beyond the range of the beeches. We walked into and out of gullies, through ecotones where eucalypts interweaved with beeches before finally returning to open woodland again. The loss in altitude became, as a type of spindly, soaring eucalyptus became dominant, though we couldn't identify the species – "Eucalypts aren't my forte," Pip noted. Fluffy sub-alpine grasses and fruiting bushes were replaced by hardy lomandras and yellow-flowered white mountain banksia (*B. integrifolia* subsp. *monticola*). As we neared the Gloucester Tops trailhead, the path widened and flattened into an easy service trail. I'd pushed ahead of Pip and Alice again as we were running late for our rendezvous with Tom. In my haste, I started a bassian thrush (*Zoothera lunulata*), perched on a log, and it hopped noiselessly into the undergrowth. Soon I'd find Tom waiting for us – bless his cotton socks – with an Esky full of cold drinks. But at that moment I was instead enjoying the sensation of placing one foot in front of the next, hearing the slight scrunch of boot on leaf litter and dirt.

There is a beautiful monotony to walking and at that moment I felt like I could just keep on going. It's a rare and nourishing experience. But then I shifted focus outside of this rhythm and suddenly I was back in the forest again, moving past eucalypts alive and dead. Cloud cover had occluded the sun and the air had cooled. I walked on, knowing whatever footprints we'd left behind would soon wash away with the next rains. W

James Stuart climbs, hikes and canyons as much as he can, and blogs about it on his website. He's also got a full-length collection of poems to his name: *Anonymous Folk Songs* (Vagabond Press). He lives in Sydney with his partner, daughter and two guinea pigs.



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An eye for nature

Having put his photography career on hold for three decades while pursuing a career in science communication, *Doug Gimesy* has since returned to the medium, generating immediate success

Regardless of practical limitations, Doug Gimesy's life – both as a science communicator and through photography – has provided him the opportunity to explore the world in a way that the majority of us can only imagine. As a result, his passion for nature and communication borders on a zealousness that's finely balanced out with perennial exuberance. In some ways, this passion was nurtured from a young age despite the fact that Gimesy came into his full photographic prowess later in life. "I think my connection with the outdoors began to develop when I was very young," he recounts. "My father was a keen alpine skier and our family would spend most winter weekends up in the Victorian Alps. As I got older, I was lucky enough to become an alpine racer and spent a lot of my winters, as well as a few summers, in the mountains both here in Australia as well as overseas."

With a mischievous twinkle in his eyes, the photographer admits, he was something of an adrenaline junkie when younger. "But with over 10 orthopaedic operations to date, I think I've retired from that lifestyle," he assures me, noting photography has somehow managed to replace the 'buzz' that downhill skiing, or other extreme activities, used to give Gimesy. "While very different, there is some overlap in how I felt as a downhill racer and how I now feel in taking conservation and wildlife photographs, but there are also some very subtle differences," he responds. "To be honest, on one level, I sometimes associate taking photos with a level of anxiety rather than the pure rush that throwing yourself down a mountain gives you. There's so much work that can go into a shoot and it all hinges on the click of the

Tiger quoll (Dasyurus maculatus) poses, mouth agape.
Photos: Doug Gimesy

shutter – it's all about the suspense, hopefully followed by the satisfaction of producing a few great images. That's not to say there aren't moments of adrenaline – sometimes just getting to a location can provide that – however these are less deliberate, less planned, and much less often."

Gimesy goes on to add: "Similar to alpine racing, when in the field, photography allows me to get away from much of the artificial, human-made world, and just focus on being there in the moment. I guess racing and photography are both forms of intense mindfulness, it's just that doing photography in the wild is more calming and serene overall".

Today, Gimesy is best known for his photography partnerships with conservation organisations such as WWF and the Australian Conservation Foundation, but it was a long journey that led him to this destination.

After completing a degree in zoology around 34 years ago, the fledgling photographer travelled to the Philippines with ethnomusicologist, Manolete Mora, with the aim of capturing images of the

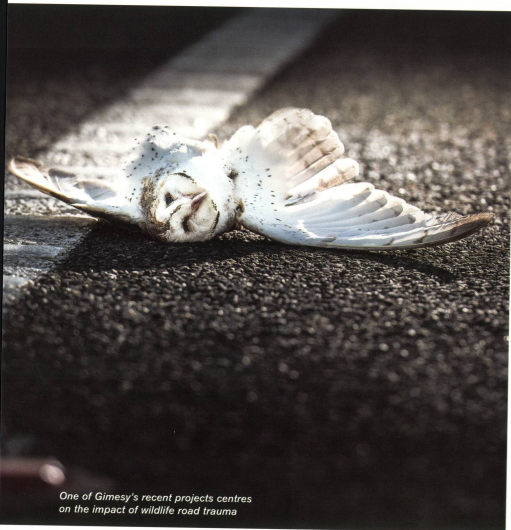
T'boli tribes people of Mindanao.

While a few of his images ended up being used professionally, Gimesy found the costs associated with freelance photography put an immediate career in the field beyond his means.

"That was in the days of film photography," he explains. "I really couldn't afford both the cost of travel and the cost of processing, so I actually moved out of the industry and ended up working in science-related communication for nearly 30 years."



A rescued kangaroo joey and its carer



One of Gimesy's recent projects centres on the impact of wildlife road trauma



Although he'd put the camera aside for three decades, it wasn't hard for Gimesy to pick it back up again around four years ago. Starting with a series of images while on a trip to Antarctica, the old skills developed with a film-based device transferred easily into the digital era – and 30 years of communication experience has provided the photographer with the skills to caption images well and tell an engaging story around them, ensuring his work is picked up. As a result, Gimesy has been published online by National Geographic and has also won multiple awards, including winning the monochrome category of the 2015 ANZANG wildlife photographer of the year and a finalist in the Big Picture Natural Worlds Photography Competition. Gimesy has also been nominated as a finalist in the upcoming 2016 ANZANG wildlife photographer of the year competition. While the old shutterbug skills have returned in force, Gimesy says that doesn't mean every shoot is easy for him, as he finds certain circumstances particularly challenging. "Anything that involves a boat is difficult for me as I get awfully sea sick, so travelling

through the Southern Ocean to get to the sub-Antarctic islands and Antarctica was tough. I spent nearly a week of the trip laid up in bed to get a few good shots, however it was so worth it, and I will do it again." Beyond that, one of the most physically taxing shoots Gimesy has undertaken involved a mission to capture a Fjordland penguin on the west coast of New Zealand's South Island.

"It took a year of planning, eight days of travel, three days in a coastal rain forest, two days standing in a river where the water was frequently up to my chest. I also garnered some 270-odd sand-fly bites." Apparently, the Fjordland penguin chooses to breed under high rainforest canopy in caves and under overhangs, or in dense vegetation, sometimes travelling hundreds of metres inland to gain access to their burrows, making them extremely difficult to capture in transit.

Even more than the physical aspect of the job, Gimesy notes that conservation and nature photography can be emotionally intense and wearying. In a recent photojournalism project at Kangaroo Island, he spent a few weeks with his partner

trying to document the many issues surrounding wildlife road trauma.

"We spent a lot of time driving between dusk and dawn when many of the animals were out, and of course the last thing you want to do is hit one and add to the carnage, so that was really stressful". He adds: "What was most tough about this shoot was when you would come across an animal that had been hit by a vehicle, yet wasn't dead and was therefore in awful pain. We constantly had the dilemma of asking ourselves 'Do we take a few minutes and let the animal suffer while we try and get an image that may catch the public's attention and change people's behaviour or even government policy, or do we euthanise this animal right now to end the suffering and move on?'".

However, Gimesy accepts the need for taking the good with the bad, as he has now found himself in a position where he can pursue his passions while also actively communicating to make a change through such a powerful medium. "If done well, photography is an incredibly efficient and effective way to engage people around you in important issues.

"The brain processes images 60,000 times faster than words. They transcend geographic and linguistic barriers and are normally perceived as representing the truth – the reality – of a given situation. All of this makes photography an incredibly powerful tool to help influence people." Having received some international notoriety as the photographer seeking to photograph all 17 penguin species, Gimesy also hopes that the medium will not only allow him to build a dialogue about the plight of wildlife and conservation, but will also provide him with a fulfilling pursuit that he can continue following into his later life.

"And, of course, there are a few things on my bucket list that I can't wait to see. The red crab migration on Christmas Island, the Okavango Delta in Botswana, the deserts in Namibia, the Gelda baboons of Ethiopia, and the snow leopards in Mongolia." Whatever comes next, we're certain to expect more excellent photography of the places and animals that Doug Gimesy captures on his travels. [W](#)

A king penguin (*Aptenodytes patagonicus*) stands alone



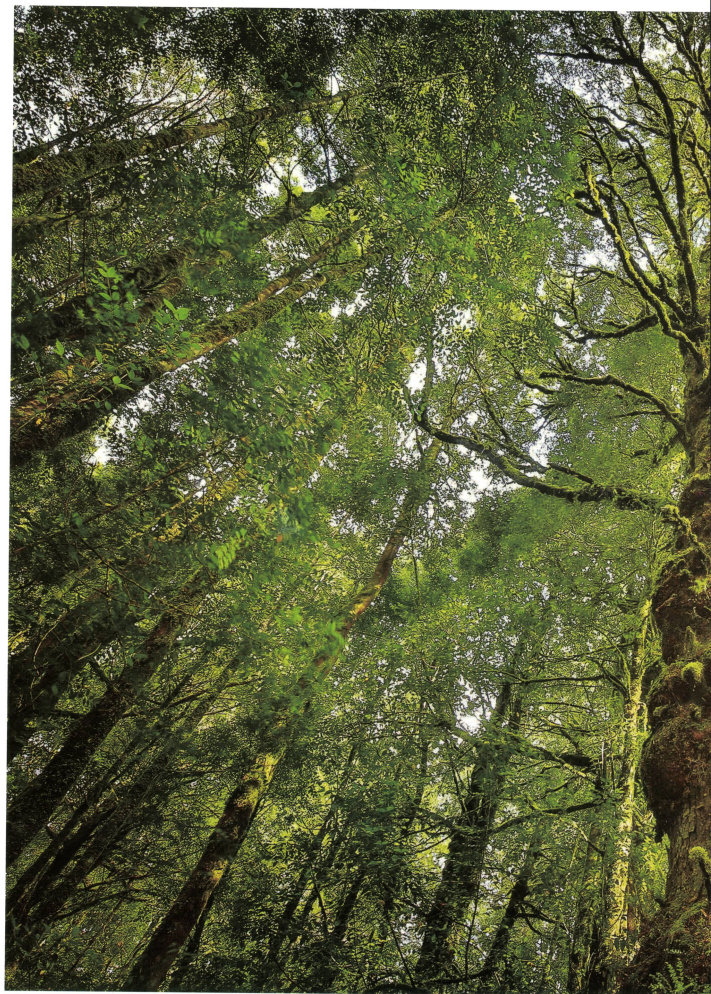
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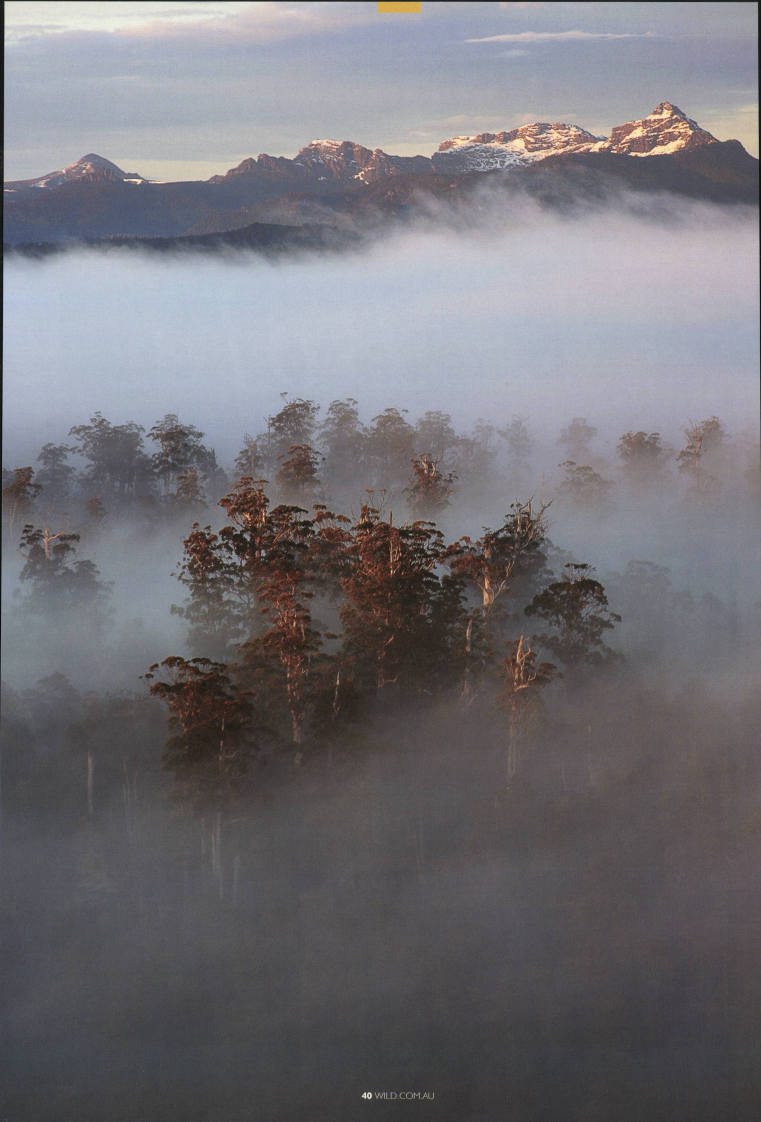


www.instagram.com/doug_gimesy



Bole to bough

The Tasmanian-based *Wolfgang Glowacki* has a talent for capturing the mood of the deep forest





Previous page: A 300-400-year-old myrtle tree located in the threatened forest of the Weld Valley in Tasmania's south.

Clockwise from left: Sunrise over old growth eucalypts forest of the Styx Valley with Mt Anne in the background; Stunning myrtle forest in the Little Fisher Valley located in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park Tasmania; Thick mixed forest along the Gordon River in Tasmania's southwest.

Wolfgang Glowacki is a landscape photographer based in Neika, Southern Tasmania. He is passionate about the environment and has a strong connection to the beautiful Tasmanian wilderness.

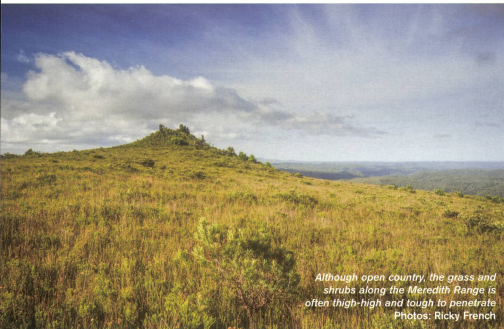


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Trackless Tarkine

Ricky French finds Tasmania's Tarkine offers myriad adventures, but off-track walking in a drought year might be beyond the pale



Although open country, the grass and shrubs along the Meredith Range is often thigh-high and tough to penetrate
Photos: Ricky French

Less than two days into my trip to the Tarkine's Meredith Range, I had no choice but to turn back.

The sky was uniformly blue, as it had been nearly every day this summer. Tasmania's drought showed no sign of breaking. There was no wind; the conditions were perfect for hiking. The four-wheel drive track I had been following steeply uphill dissolved into an overgrown tangle of shrubs and cutting grass, but a faint footpad led me up the hillside to a lonely cairn. The main range revealed itself up close for the first time and took what was left of my breath away. The mountains seemed to swell before my eyes. They were enormous, and the granite boulders dotted their surface, the size of houses. I was exhausted, drenched in sweat, but I hadn't even got to the good stuff. I turned in circles, taking in a view of never-ending wilderness. In every direction lay the Tarkine. West to Mount Donaldson and the Norfolk Range. South to Mount Lindsay and Mount Livingstone and the Pieman River. North was the bulk of the Meredith Range; muscular peaks that seemed to goad me into venturing

upwards. But there was no water. No streams, not even a puddle. No track, either. Going on would be suicide.

A few hours later I was back at the Whyte River. It ran like rust through the trees. I drained the last drop from my water bottle and got ready for the final walk out. There would be no re-filling my bottle from the Whyte River. It was poisoned by mining upstream. But it was also beautiful. It ran clear, wild, full of promise, full of history, and full of lessons. The Whyte River was the story of Tarkine. A place that takes up so much space, but isn't even on the map.

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The Tarkine is an area of approximately 450,000 hectares (just over a million acres) in the northwest of Tasmania. Like most of western Tasmania it is rich in minerals, and the area has a history of mining to go with its reputation of impenetrable wilderness. Its borders are generally agreed to be the Arthur River in the north, the western coastline, the Pieman River in the south, and the Murchison Highway in the east. But the name is unofficial. The landscape takes in

a staggering variety of forms, from the granite mountains of the Meredith Range to buttongrass plains, to a wild and remote coastline full of Aboriginal middens and sacred sites, to the broad, stately Pieman River with its jungle-town of Corinna. Plus (and you might want to write this one down) it is home to the second largest expanse of cool temperate rainforest in the world.

It is also unprotected. Nearly all of this ecologically and culturally vital area is open to mining and forestry. The number of open cut pockmarks is proportional to the price of iron ore. You could say the story of Tasmania is embedded in the Tarkine. Cultural change is slow in this part of the world, where many locals feel that 'locking up' the land would consign them to unemployment and poverty, a feeling that is not lost on state governments both Liberal and Labor, desperate to pick up votes in the swinging seat of Braddon.

One thing that conservationists believe that will help protect the Tarkine from the threats of mining and logging is tourism. The Tarkine receives few visitors. A lack of accommodation, operators and tourism promotion has meant most tourists stick to the more hyped regions of the island. But it's circular. The tourists won't come unless there are facilities, and operators won't invest in facilities unless tourists come. A proper World Heritage designation could be the first step. At the very least some form of legislative recognition of the importance of this wilderness area is essential. You would think it would be a mere formality. Late last year the Bob Brown Foundation released a guidebook to the Tarkine, called *Tarkine Trails*, by Phill Pullinger. The book is an update to a Tarkine guidebook written by Bob Brown himself back in 1993. It's a definitive guide for hiking, cycling and paddling, contains stunning photographs, and is essential reading for anyone heading to the Tarkine. The introduction is written by Greg Irons, who runs Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary

near Hobart, as well as the only guided hiking experience in the Tarkine, also called Tarkine Trails. I joined an expedition to Tiger Ridge, from which they base their four-day Tarkine Rainforest Walk.

TARKINE TRAILS

I'd never been on a guided walk before, but the value of the Tarkine Trails experience quickly became apparent as we made our ascent through the rainforest to the lavish base camp on Tiger Ridge. Guides Trevor and Jane did more than just cook delicious meals and navigate our way through the dense rainforest, they delivered a four-day intensive course in the history and ecology of the Tarkine, and I went away babbling my newfound wisdom to anyone who would listen (I'm sure that was their aim).

The walking wasn't demanding by any stretch. Our two main walking days were spent slowly picking our way through the rainforest, with frequent stops for Trevor and Jane to offer their interpretative expertise into everything from flora and fauna to geology, indigenous history, Tasmanian politics and the rise of the conservation movement. The enormous gum trees (*Eucalyptus obliqua*) that shot out above the main rainforest canopy were around 600 years old, and nearing the end of their life. They would have germinated around the time of the last major fire through here, during the reign of Henry V. Without fire they would die

out and the area would become pure rainforest.

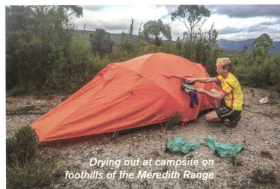
For all the lavish beauty of the rainforest, there is actually little diversity amongst the flora. The dominant species are sassafras and myrtle beech (not related to the myrtle family), but there are also horizontals, leatherwood, moss and liverworts, ferns, laurels and native plum. It was quite astounding to think that we were standing among the remnants of Gondwanaland, when Tasmania was connected to Australia's mainland, New Zealand, Antarctica and South America. This cool temperate rainforest rode out ice ages by retreating into small pockets in the valleys, or hugging the coast, before reestablishing and spreading out again to now become the size it is today. No one, not even the Aboriginals, has ever lived in this rainforest. It's too cool, with not enough edible vegetation, or animals to hunt. The Aboriginal people passed through every year during summer, quickly, on their way to the open hunting grounds to the northeast. They didn't linger. So in that sense, when you're in this rainforest, you are in a truly untouched wilderness. Walk a few metres off the track and you could well be the first human to ever stand on that spot. Being in that forest, knowing how old it was and how quickly it could be gone, is an unforgettable feeling.

Our group picked our way through the track, marked with pink tags. This track

was cut entirely by Tarkine Trails, and the company's history was recounted to us that evening by Trevor over a salmon dinner. It was founded by three conservationists in the 1990s, who got the idea after unsuccessfully protesting the construction of the controversial Western Explorer Road, which runs for 112 kilometres through most of the western Tarkine.

"Not enough people knew about the area, or cared," explained Trevor. "So they decided to take a different tack and show that there was a more sustainable activity in the area other than mining and forestry. That's where the idea of taking people into the Tarkine started."

Day three of our rainforest experience took us down a track to the Huskinson River. Our interludes included a risqué delve into the sex lives of tree ferns, and a visit to 'Mother Myrtle,' a huge myrtle almost



Drying out at campsite on foothills of the Meredith Range



Paddling the Pieman

completely hollowed out but still healthy, plus an inspection of many myriads of fungi for that are abundant throughout the rainforest. We lingered at the Huskinson River, where Trevor and Jane served vegetable curry, before setting off alone at intervals back up to camp, to appreciate the solitude of the untouched rainforest. Silent walking in a silent, green world. On the last night at Tiger Ridge I stood out on the veranda of the long house and stared at the giant, proud trees in front of me. There was no wind, no sound. How incredible, I thought, that something so big, so intricate, with all those branches, leaves and extrusions into trees around it, could stand so still. The humans, the animals, the rainforest, we all had different ambitions for the Tarkine. The gums wanted a lightning strike, for fire to raise merry hell through the rainforest and destroy the competition. But the beech and the sassafras, they just wanted to stand still in the grey evening light, and have their leaves gently glistened by the misty rain, and be left alone for ever.



Tarkine Trails guide Trevor Beltz shares his knowledge on a guided walk



Trevor Beltz presents 'Mother Myrtle' during the Tarkine Trails rainforest walk

MEREDITH RANGE

For independent adventurers, the Tarkine offers many great day walks, but not a whole lot of multi-day options unless you're completely self-sufficient, extremely fit and experienced in navigating through untracked wilderness. I was keen on the Meredith Range because it looked so inviting from the photos in the guidebook. To get there via the Whyte River you drive along Waratah Road and park your car at an old gravel quarry. From here a four-wheel drive track leads down to a camp spot on the river. It's ironic that most access roads that exist in the Tarkine were put there for mining and forestry. There are very few purpose-built hiking tracks at all. I personally hope that changes.

It was a steep but short descent to the Whyte River, where an old, rusty cableway hung many metres above the waterline indicates the potential of the river to flood. The river presented no challenge during this drought, though, and I waded across to begin what would be a leg-destroying climb into the foothills of the Meredith Range. My pack was stupidly heavy, with a tent, water and camera gear all combining to make every step uphill an exercise in quadricep abuse. The bush was undeniably pretty, but by the time the track levelled out and the trees dropped away I was so coated in sweat that I could barely open my eyes. This wasn't good news as I very nearly stepped on a tiger snake, who was enjoying the last of the afternoon heat in the middle of the track. I set up camp on a ridge that looked across to the main Meredith Range and



went in search of water, but found none. It was a foreboding sign.

The next morning I pushed through the overgrown track and launched an assault on the hill that would deliver me to a flat, broad summit; the last of the Meredith foothills. Thus it was that I found myself on the highpoint where our story begins, parched and profoundly moved by the vastness and toughness of the mighty Tarkine landscape. From where I stood I had a vision of a hiking track leading across the Meredith Range, from Whyte River to Harman River and on to Pieman Road. Put in some huts with toilets and water tanks, to minimise impact on the environment, plus bridges over the rivers. Make it fun and accessible for average hikers, and watch visitor numbers grow.

CORINNA TO MOUNT DONALDSON

Corinna is what I imagine a tiny settlement on the Amazon might look like, if it was staffed by indifferent European backpackers. The Pieman River laps at the toes of town and is so sleepy you can't tell which way it flows. It's from Corinna that you can board the famous Arcadia II for a cruise out to Pieman Heads. The 'Fatman' barge is the only way to cross the Pieman by car, but you're better off parking in the township and sampling some of the many hiking tracks. I went to Savage River twice: the first time by kayak (hired in Corinna) and the second time walking. The walking track leads along the Pieman, past huon



Late afternoon light in the stunning rainforest at Tiger Ridge

pinetrees, before climbing over a bluff and descending to the somewhat sedate Savage River. It was a gorgeous spot, rich in human history as well as natural beauty. I set up camp here, a stone's throw from

the wreck of the SS Croydon, a steamship that sunk in while loading logs in 1919. Destination next day was Mount Donaldson. From Savage River a tagged track leads through the sparse bush (for

this area was extensively logged) to a bridge on the Western Explorer Road. There are many scenic bends in the Savage River to stop and take in the beauty by the water. After crossing the bridge you climb through a well-cut track onto the open grassy tops of Mount Donaldson, where switchbacks take you round the back of the mountain and up to the summit. It's a fun walk suitable for all ages. From the summit you'll get some of the best views of the Tarkine – down to Pieman River, a close-up of the Norfolk Range and across to the west coast. You also see the open cut scars of mining cut into the hills, a reminder of how delicately balanced the values are in this part of the world. I reached the open summit of Mount Donaldson an hour and a half after leaving the bridge. The sun was warm and just a whiff of mist remained in the ancient glacial valleys of the Tarkine. There should be more walks like it. Let's hope one day soon there are. W

Ricky French is a writer and columnist from Melbourne. He grew up in New Zealand, where he still returns to regularly to tramp. A regular contributor to *Wild*, Ricky is an advocate for improved access to Australia's wild areas for hikers and paddlers of all abilities.



The Pieman River from the slopes of Mt Donaldson



Chasing Abels

Australia's answer to the Scottish Munros or English Wainrights, the Abels are best explained by one who 'collects' them, like *Louise Fairfax*

An Abel is a Tasmanian mountain greater than 1100 metres high, with a 150-metre drop off on all sides between it and the next mountain. When I ask people on the Abels List – the tally of people who have climbed the most Abels – the inevitable question: “Why do you do this?” I get answers that can be divided into two groups. Kent Lillico, the fourth man to summit every Abel, is typical of most that I ask. Kent began climbing the Abels (along with other mountains) just because he loved mountains and found great pleasure in being on the top. Somewhere in there –

ten years ago for Kent – he began to keep a record of which ones he had climbed. Only as a third step did the notion of actually completing the whole congeries of Abels come to be a factor. This third step usually occurs when the climber notices that there are far more ticks than blanks in the index. At this moment, a certain desire for the neatness of completion takes over, and the climber wants the lot. Certainly Kent's account mirrors my own. The other kind of answer comes from those who tell me adamantly that they are not collecting: they just happen to

have climbed a lot of mountains. However, as many current collectors also passed through this phase, it could be seen as an early phase that may morph into collecting habits later. Or perhaps these people are not collectors by nature, not completers of things begun or not compulsive enough to be bitten by such a bug. One thing must be remembered, however, and that is that lists or points are, for all of us, I believe, an excuse for the game we play, and not the reason we play it. Au fond of this game lies a genuine love of the wilderness and of mountains. If this were not the case, we could stay at



*Stallen Jones, who has been
Abelling for 62 years
Photos: Louise Fairfax*

home and collect coins or stamps instead. Thus I do not know a single Abelist who does not delight in the minutiae along the way: alpine flowers, fungi embedded in moss, patterns in distorted tree roots, tumbling cascades, petals illuminated by low sun, or interesting rock formations. Few of us enjoy the inevitable band of dense bushes that normally guards the region between about 800 and 900 metres above sea level, although we all buckle down and get through it for the joy that awaits us on top. All of us love grand views, although we do differ in our appreciation of a summit cairn in the

mist. I find such a thing alluring, although I confess, a misty summit cairn operates as a summons to me to revisit.

There is something very satisfying about gazing out at a scene where a cornucopia of attractively jagged silhouettes surrounds you on top: you recognise most shapes as old friends, mountains you've spent hours or even nights with, peaks whose moods and little oddities you know. You can number on one hand the ones you haven't yet visited. Paul Gees, the second man to summit every Abel, was once asked: "Hey Paul, what mountain is that?", the questioner pointing to a shape on the

horizon. His reply amuses me: "I don't know, but I've climbed it." Lee Evans, the most experienced female, reports similar: a group of youths were on the Lake St Clair ferry, discussing which huts they'd slept in and which tracks they'd walked. For some reason one of them turned to her and asked if anyone went up the peaks that could be seen from the boat.

"Yes, quite a few people do."

"Oh, are there tracks up there?"

"Nope."

"Have you climbed any of those mountains?"

She surveyed the scene to double check:

THE ABELS LIST

ALL 158 ABELS

Phil Dawson

Paul Geeves – *Record for fastest*

round of Abels: 17 yrs 10 months

Kent Lillico – *Youngest finisher so far*

Tony Woolford – *First 'family man' to complete*

Andrew Davey

Malcolm Waterston

John Carswell – *Took 54 years to*

complete. Record for longest time to complete

Brian O'Byrne – *Oldest finisher at*

age 68

5 OR FEWER TO GO:

Martin Doran (1)

Terry Brain (3)

Graeme Pennicott (3)

Dale Lisson (3)

David Harris (4)

Stuart Bowling (5) *aged 44.*

Second youngest male on the list

10 OR FEWER TO GO:

Mark Wright (6)

David Walker (6)

Lee Evans (F)(7) *aged 58 ½.*

Abelling for 44 years so far

11-20 LEFT:

David Young (SV)(11) *SV =*

supervet. David is over 70

Maureen Martin (F)(12)

Mark Hallam (13) *Aged 39;*

youngest male on list

Matthew Cloudsdale(18)

David Seaton (19)

FEMALES:

Lee Evans (151)

Maureen Martin (146)

Louise Fairfax (134)

Helen Thyne (124)

Sally Coltheart (118)

Suellen Jones (SV)(106) *Aged*

70. Oldest female on list

Vonda Kerrison (100)

Shelly Napier (98) *Aged 33.*

Youngest on the list

Amanda Lennard (88)

Carolyn Farrar (87) *Aged 38,*

second youngest on list

Mark Wright, soon to complete, and Andrew Davey, fifth on the List, crossing a river after climbing Mt Sorell



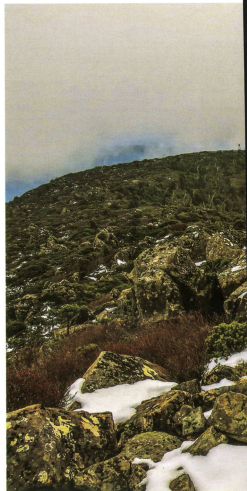
"Yes, the lot."

I called Lee the 'most experienced' female, which introduces an interesting difficulty when describing Abelists. Does one call someone with the biggest number 'the best'? Which adjective is appropriate when describing a bushwalker at the top of the list? Having a large number of Abels is a bit like having a high university qualification: you have to be smart to get it, but you can be smart and still not have it. With regard to Abels, you have to be a very experienced bushperson to have collected more than 70 Abels, but you can be a superlative bushman or woman and not have amassed this number.

How can we describe an accomplished Abelist? Abels are not easy climbs (with a few exceptions). Some are scary in their exposure or difficulty. Others are remote – some involving a ten-day expedition to reach them. Many are protected by a prohibitive band of the thickest, nastiest scrub possible to fight through. This is reflected in statistics. Whereas the youngest person to do a full round of Wainwrights (England) is aged six, and the Munros (primarily Scotland) is 10, the youngest completer of a round of Abels is Kent Lillico, who was 50 when he climbed her concluding peak of the round. Paul Geeves holds the record for the fastest completion: nearly 18 years from first to final. The record for a round of Wainwrights is six days and 13 hours; for a round of Munros is 39 days. We are not slow; our mountains are tough. No one has even begun on a second round of Abels, where the record for rounds of Munros is 13, reflecting the comparative ease of the Scottish counterparts. Meanwhile, at the other end of the

spectrum, the person who is still actively climbing new peaks who has the longest climbing record is Suellen Jones, who climbed her first Abel at age eight, and is still climbing, leading, and rescuing other people at age 70. Sue's looks and vigour in the bush totally belie her age.

Because of the nature and difficulty of the



Abels, no one has done a round solo, and no one has begun on that journey. Lee Evans is the nearest, with all but four of her Abels so far being done as solo efforts. Mostly, one climbs in groups or with at least one friend for company. Thus, far from being competitive, Abel collecting is normally a highly companionable and cooperative affair. Along the way are handshakes, high fives, hugs and celebratory port or whisky by the gas stoves at night. Many summits are most definitely team efforts, and the anticipation and, later, joy of achievement, are shared in team bonhomie. Information about routes and traps and tips to make the journey easier are freely shared. While completers of Wainwrights or Munros would certainly be fitter than the average person, Abelists – even someone 'only' at the halfway mark – have special attributes not required in Europe. For a start, they need to be able to carry heavy packs, to find time for ten-day expeditions, to be able to push through dense scrub and to survive extreme weather conditions. Each and every one of



Carolyn Farrer, at 37, the youngest person to be on the Abels List. Carolyn is president of Launceston Walking Club

us on the List has camped and climbed in the snow, experienced blizzards and thunderstorms, walked in mid-thirties heat, been desperate for water and

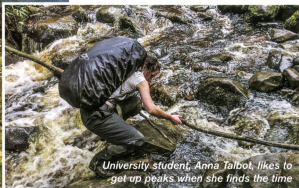
wondered if we were going to collapse from hypothermia. I think it is fair to say that each of us has faced a moment when we have feared that maybe we won't make it out alive. Most of us have experienced days that were fourteen to seventeen hours long. Some of us have been far too close to bushfires or flooded rivers for comfort. We inhabit wilderness that Europe doesn't know, and that is stimulating, fabulous – and also daunting. To sit in a spot and wonder if you are the first people to have ever been right here, with the seeming eternity of world's history stretched behind you, is both humbling and liberating conjointly. Of course, resourcefulness and adaptability are qualifications required.

Terry Brain points out that it is virtually imperative to either have a very supportive family, or no family at all if you want to be serious in this quest. For this reason, I hold Tony Woolford's title of "first family man to complete" (a title I have given him, not one he appropriated for himself) to be of special significance. Tony has four children, which immediately decreased the opportunities for undertaking expeditions while they were still at home.

In Abelling, as in life in general, the harder the goal sought – the more effort and energy we invest in the task – the greater our sense of reward when we overcome physical and psychological barriers and reach goals that we didn't really believe were possible beforehand. Tennis stars are not the only ones to cry when they reach their personal summit. **W**



Kent Lillico, fourth and youngest completer, with Monika Povolny, a keen Abelist



University student, Anna Talbot, likes to get up peaks when she finds the time

A former academic and Australian representative at athletics, orienteering and triathlon, Louise now cares for her ill husband, combining that role with freelance writing and photography. Wild places are important to her for physical and spiritual reasons. She loves the act of gaining height, as well as sleeping on summits and photographing nature's beauty.

Beginner's guide: *Climbing trees*

Climbing trees may sound like child's play, but Yoav Daniel Bar-Ness provides plenty of reasons for adults to take up this arboreal activity

A ratcheting ascender helps to slowly inch up a rope into the evergreen branches of a douglas fir. Photos: Yoav Daniel Bar-Ness

There are adventures and expeditions in almost every Australian urban backyard and wilderness park – if you know where to look. In each treetop is a distinct environment to which few humans have likely ever ventured, and where wilderness can be experienced in a new and magical way. With our natural gifts and a bit of technology, we can explore the treetops of the koala, kookaburra and drop-bear. Australia is notable for many spectacular plants: towering gum trees, globally rare Southern Hemisphere rainforests, monsoonal rainforests of the tropical north and more. Even in the human landscapes of city and suburb there are native and exotic trees of all shapes and description.

Let's use our opposable thumbs and our stereoscopic vision as we clamber back into the treetops. We'll review our arboreal primate heritage, touch on the ecological environment and review the methods of access. We'll also have a good look at best practices for safety, minimal impact and maximum fun, and finally explore a variety of ongoing treetop projects.

TREECLIMBING: OUR SHARED HISTORY

My first glimpse of the treetops was as a toddler. One of my very earliest memories is marvelling at a piece of broccoli: in its miniature crown I could imagine a tiny version of myself exploring a strange tilted and branching world. Now, when I find myself in the natural forest, I try to remember this lesson and imagine how grand even the smallest shrub or herb would be to the small animals of the forest. Some of the most exciting treetops are far too small for us to experience in an immersive way; even the grassy lawns are a closed forest canopy to the animals moving beneath. In geologically recent times, we've adapted to the environment of the solid ground and the artificial environment. However, with a quick glance at our primate cousins, it's clear that our species has a rich inheritance of treeclimbing talents. Our eyes, side by side, help us to interpret the three-dimensional world. Our shoulders allow us to reach high above, and, most strikingly, our thumbs fit around a branch securely and comfortably. To climb a tree is to reconnect with the playful and the magical days of childhood. In a world of fearful things, a healthy tree to climb is a trustworthy and predictable friend. For many children, a climbing tree offers their first wild space independent of their parents, and can spark a lifelong interest in wilderness exploration.

Worldwide, a declining number of forest dwellers retain ancient skills and practices as treeclimbers, while simultaneously a growing number of city-dwellers harness

modern equipment and new practices. I have had the educational experience of standing with plastic harness and ropes on the ground while a South Indian Adivasi man scrambled up a rainforest tree trunk using nothing but a strip of bark tied around his ankles. While new technologies have brought new abilities to travel in a wider range of treetops, it's always worth remembering that there are older skills that we may have forgotten.



Ancient branches of a forest giant provide a platform for aerial moss gardens



Inside the core of a giant New Caledonian banyan tree

UNDERSTANDING THE TREE

Trees are at once the most prosaic and the most mysterious of things. While almost every toddler can point to a tall plant and recognise it as a tree, these familiar things hold many secrets still. Just as the rock climber becomes a keen student of geology, so the treeclimber will come to appreciate the diversity and complexity of trees. As you begin treeclimbing, you'll gain a sense of species, individuality and community. In the forest, a number of different tree species compete with each other to reach the sunlight, and each one of these has a long evolutionary history. Some tall, upright trees are more closely related to small flowering shrubs than they are to other species of trees. Knowledge of the plant's family can help inform your climb: where does the Norfolk pine come from, and why is it so interesting to botanists? Is a particular tree in the centre of its home range, or on the edges of its favoured zone? Is it a native plant in the forest, or an exotic tree brought from afar? Is it thriving and reproducing, or is it in decline?

Each tree is also an individual, with a life experience and stories to tell. An old tree records in its structure decades or centuries

of environmental change, forest competition and individual expression. The damage from storms, lightning, wind, animals and human activity all contribute to the unique personality of a tree. These characteristics can bring a charm and attraction to the individual. We have a well-developed vocabulary for describing the terrain of a particular mountain, but we often have not practiced the words to describe a particular tree.

Each of these individuals is growing in a community. Whether in the forest or the parkland, it will be in some way interacting with other living things. Other species may hinder or outcompete above or below ground. Trees of the same species may actually assist each by sharing energy via fungal interactions. The ages of particular trees can be especially useful in understanding the interactions between different individuals; a species may be present both as forest elder and as seedling, or it may only be present following on from one particular event.

If you think of the forest as a village, with a diversity of different-aged individuals in a diversity of occupations, you can start to get a sense of the community to which your climbing tree belongs. You can never know too much about the tree itself: your life hangs on its branches.

THE ENVIRONMENT

The environment in the treetops can be as varied as the trees themselves. Your sense of place is first and foremost determined by species: a tall eucalypt is a stark and exposed tower of wood, whereas a spreading banyan is a lush network of braided strands. Life history and experience can bring structural complexity to the tree crown: a young tree will be relatively simple, while a very old tree can harbour branches rich with decay, scars from lightning storms and fire, or even the accumulated soils of the aerial rainforest plants. The environment can be determined by the neighbouring forest, or lack thereof: a tree in a park encircled by grass offers a very different view to a forest tree competing with and surrounded by other plants. Not all trees offer a relentlessly vertical environment: some spread outwards at low heights while others race to the sky.

Climbing in all these different trees does offer some commonalities. You will inevitably be surrounded by the bright green leaves of the crown, since the only purpose in growing upright is to bring those leaves up to the sunlight. You will be sharing the tree with countless tiny insects, mites and even smaller organisms, as a tree is a veritable landscape to them. You will find healthy, dominant branches and declining,

suppressed ones. Most amazingly, you'll be in a truly dynamic, living environment, which changes from day-to-day and season-to-season. The form of the branches you are climbing around is a record of many past years of life history, including the very moment you are within it.

Surprisingly, what you may find is a sense of wildness. Even in the busiest city street few people pay attention to the arboreal, natural cycle of leaf and bud, flower and fruit. The

birds, mammals and insects live complex and meaningful lives in their treetop worlds, undetected by the humans below. As you climb more and more trees, you'll be able to spot these differences and similarities more readily.

GETTING UP THERE

You can experience the treetops in many ways. You can start by getting on your hands and knees and studying the plants of the forest or garden floor, and watching for the life and wildness that exists within these low branches – because a small shrub is a towering tree from a different perspective. Looking out of a window can bring you into a secret world of flowers and birds, and tourist canopy walkways can safely assist you in discovering the high treetops. If you are in touch with your inner child and are ready to use your natural tree climbing talents, then you'll be able to experience many trees safely without any extra equipment. You can hook your body securely onto a branch using your elbows, the back of your knees, and your underarms. Rubber shoes help greatly, and you may find that long sleeves and pants make for a more enjoyable experience. Helmets, gloves and safety glasses add an important element of protection.

Eventually, you may desire a more immersive experience at higher altitudes... and that is where the ropes come in. Techniques requiring little more than a length of cordage have been used for centuries, but in recent years the same diversity of plastic and metal equipment that has transformed caving and rock climbing has also arrived to the professional arborist's toolkit.

In a nutshell, technical tree climbing ropework is a completely different branch of ropework than either caving or rock climbing. A rope is thrown over a branch, and the end retrieved and secured to the climber. It's conceptually more similar to the work-positioning of the caver and industrial rope access technician than it is to the fall-arresting techniques of the mountaineer and crack climber.

It's far beyond the scope of this article to provide instruction in modern on-rope treeclimbing techniques, but there is an educational infrastructure around professional arboricultural treeclimbing. Almost every town worldwide will have a professional arboriculturist caring for the trees in a government or entrepreneurial capacity – ask around as to who is the most forward-thinking and technically skilled and say hello. There are formal vocational training pathways to learn the skills of the arborist. No matter what and



where you learn, practice it safely and with great care.

BEST PRACTICES

Like all wilderness explorations, the arboreal environment is best experienced with care and ethics. You can optimise your treeclimbing by being considerate of the tree, the public and the land.

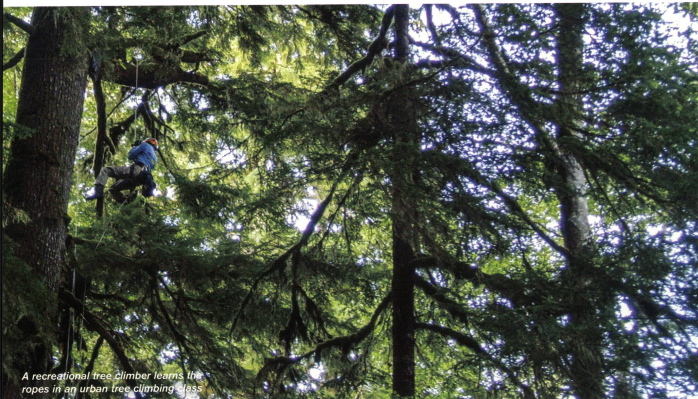
When you are in a tree, keep in mind that it is a living thing that can be injured by our enthusiasms. If you can climb carefully and in control, you can minimise the scrapes and breakages caused to the tree. A giant tree can recover quickly from some injuries such as shallow gouges, but these same wounds can provide a fatal vector for disease to enter the organism. Within the tree, the organisms living within the crown structure need to be protected and left unharmed: the birds with their nests, the insects with their hives and the fungus with their mushroom fruiting bodies.

Eucalyptus trees are notorious for having hanging dead branches that can be dislodged suddenly. Bees, birds, snakes, ants and other animals can all pose distinct dangers to the Australian climber. In wild forests, the dead branches are critically important wildlife habitat. Compared to the well-tended trees of the city, the trees of the forest will seem messy and complicated.

Treeclimbing can pose a danger to others below. Climbers in trees overhanging parks and walking trails can inadvertently drop branches or equipment that can fall onto passers by. Proactive identification of hazards is essential for a safe tree climb.

TWELVE TREETOP PROJECTS

1. Bird's nest monitoring of the endangered 40-spotted pardalote – Amanda Edworthy at Australia National University
2. Large-scale panoramic photography of a single tree – Steven Pearce and Jen Sanger of the Tasmanian Tree Project
3. Aerial silk dance performances – Louise Kiiver and David Penissii of Aerial Dynamics (Cairns)
4. Raven's nest camera setup – Outreach Ecology
5. Documentary film camera setup and rigging – Grant Harris of Ironbark Environmental Arboriculture
6. Arboricultural education and interpretation – Tree Wizard Tom
7. Canopy insect biodiversity compared between ancient and regrowth forests – The Nature Conservancy (USA)
8. Treeclimbing skills training for rainforest botanists – Simon Amos and Fieldskills (Borneo)
9. Spherical photography documentation of different arboreal environments – Outreach Ecology
10. Peruvian rainforest aerial plant surveys – Damien Catchpole
11. Tourist access and forest education – Arbrevolution (New Caledonia)
12. Empowering physically disabled people to tree climb – Tree Climbers International (USA)



A recreational tree climber learns the ropes in an urban tree climbing class.

Different parts of Australia have different regulations that can be applied to tree climbing; an urban park may explicitly forbid climbing in the trees while another may host the arborists' tree climbing championships. Sensitivity to these land management policies will help other treeclimbers to plan and enjoy their own excursions.

PROJECTS

The natural values of Australia's wildlands have, overall, benefited from trail building and infrastructure projects. The access points, trail markers and interpretation signs of the bushlands are key ingredients in educating visitors young and old about the significance of wild Australia. While you are free to choose your own adventure, connecting your experience to a pathway of study, documentation or art may help guide you in

your own treetop tramping.

You can use a camera, a measuring tape and a notepad to begin your own scientific observation. You can photograph the wildlife and habitats within the tree; measure the tree branches, the leaves and the fruits; and record whatever you find noteworthy.

The same notebook or camera can serve you in your artistic endeavours: sketching, tracing and writing. You can sing along with the birds, and you can drum on the stem and branches in rhythm with the wind. You can perform a dance, write a poem or whatever your heart desires.

As a venue for privacy and solace, the treetops can be a quiet and restful place to meditate, recover, remember, or contemplate. Alone or with a friend, the crown of a tree is a compact wilderness that can inspire you in the same way that

the vast mountain landscapes do.

Over almost twenty years of interacting with mountains and trees, I've found that I have, surprisingly, made friends with these silent stationary features. When I see a picture of a known volcano, or walk past a notable tree, they stand out as familiar individuals. To climb into a tree is to build a very intimate relationship with it, one that goes far beyond treehugging. Even in the most crowded city, the treetops are a wilderness experienced only rarely by humans - they await your discovery. **W**

Your Daniel Bar-Ness is a conservation ecologist and treetop enthusiast from Ohio based in Southern Tasmania. He is on a long-term quest to find the Kalpavriksh, the legendary Sanskrit wish-fulfilling tree. He hasn't found it yet but will make sure to tell you when he does.



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Australian forests: A study in change

Australia's unique forests and woodlands have been shaped by millennia of change, writes *Michele Kohout*



Burnt coastal tea-tree along track to Oberon Bay, Wilsons Promontory NP.
Photos and illustrations by the author

Why does a woodland exist in a particular area and not a rainforest? We know that factors such as soil, topography and climate play a role in determining where plant communities are found and the species they are composed of. But the past history of a continent as unique as Australia is just as, if not more, important to understand. As part of our exploration of the past, we also need to consider how plants have been able to (or not able to) respond to natural disturbances, such as fire, since these influences continue to mould our landscape.

The vegetation history of Australia is complex but can be distilled into a few key phenomena. Rainforest dominated Australia until about 20 million years ago, when fragmentation of Gondwana and continental drift north resulted in a drier climate overall, with increased seasonality and climatic diversity. Rainforest began to be replaced by forests better suited to the climate, those with harder, smaller leaves – wet sclerophyll

forests. By around two million years ago, inland Australia was dominated by open savannas and woodlands, while rainforests were restricted to the uplifted mountain ranges on the eastern coastline (e.g. Dorrigo National Park). It is important to note that one vegetation type is not 'better' than another, they are simply different and reflect the factors influencing vegetation at the time.

As Australia began to experience a more arid climate, sclerophyllous plants that were highly adaptive to environmental change were able to expand their dominance in terms of both number of species and area covered. These species have characteristics that may have evolved initially to cope with a lack of water, but which also happened to allow them to survive fire. Thick bark can protect a plant from desiccation, but also protects buds and allows rapid resprouting after fire. Similarly, thick woody seed capsules, held unopened on a plant for many years (e.g. hakeas), can protect seeds from a drought as well as the heat from a fire, and

enable regeneration.

By comparison, rainforest plants tend to have fleshy fruits in order to attract animals to disperse them. An example of this type of plant is the lilly pilli, of which there are several species in Australia. They tend to be fast growing, in order to reach the sunlight in the canopy and have thin, broad leaves. The bark is thin and there is little need to have below ground storage since resources such as water and nutrients are abundant. No wonder these plants don't cope well with fire!

There were also climatic cycles associated with glaciations during the last 350 000 years that had an impact on the flora. Each period of glaciation resulted in cool, wet conditions which promoted herbfields and grasslands. By contrast the interglacial periods were drier and warmer, dominated by sclerophyll forests and woodlands where fire was common. The last interglacial period (120,000 years ago) resulted in a major expansion in the Myrtaceae family (e.g.

eucalypts, melaleucas), which coincided with an increase in fire intensity and frequency. The Myrtaceae continue to dominate our present day flora in terms of numbers of species, abundance and the diversity of habitats they occupy.

While our long-term history has shaped the general distribution of plant communities, at the continental scale, disturbances can influence smaller scale patterns. Disturbances can often be dramatic events that completely remove vegetation - volcanic eruptions, landslides, earthquakes, glaciation, floods and fire. Disturbance events also have the potential to create patchiness or heterogeneity because parts of the landscape are affected to a different degree or unaffected. This variability may be due to topography or even just chance, and leads to the creation of different types of vegetation at different ages. This diversity of plant communities then leads to differences in the types of fauna depending on different habitats, resources and niches.

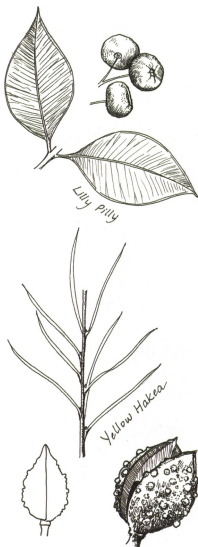
Because volcanoes are not currently active in Australia, we tend to forget that they have shaped many parts of our continent. In Western Victoria, there is evidence of over 400 volcanic eruption points, making it one of the largest volcanic areas in the world. The lava flows from these created basalt, which in turn supports fertile native grasslands. Tower Hill is an example of a volcanic formation thought to have erupted about 30,000 years ago, creating a shallow crater that later filled with water to form a lake.

Similarly, glaciers shaped the landscapes of Tasmania and to a lesser extent on the mainland, leaving behind features such as glacial lakes (e.g. Blue Lake at Kosciuszko), cirques and moraines. Glaciers eroded some parts of the landscape and deposited material in other places leading to the formation of deep alpine humus soils resulting in our 'alps' being described as soil mountains rather than rock mountains.

But the most obvious current disturbance in Australia is fire, and we regularly witness its impacts. Images of a recently burnt landscape can be confronting - blackened, stark and devoid of vegetation, and this could easily be considered a tragedy, especially in the short term. But perhaps we need to consider the long-term consequences of disturbances such as fire in shaping our unique and varied habitats.

Much of our flora is able to cope with fire by resprouting or regenerating from seed. If fire is excluded, some plants cannot regenerate and the population will decline and eventually disappear from a habitat. But it is not just fire that is important, it is the particular combination of intervals between fire, season of fire and intensity that is important. Fire is required to maintain

healthy populations of *Banksia spinulosa*, which regenerates from seed only. Populations of this species will eventually decline in the absence of fire. But fire too frequently (less than 10 years) will also be a threat because the plant will not have flowered and formed enough seeds in order to replace the population sufficiently. The loss of this species would affect animals depending on the flowers as a food source, such as native bees and nectar-feeding birds.



Variations in plant response to disturbances such as fire will therefore create variations in vegetation type and habitat. Plant communities range from being killed by fire (e.g. rainforest) to those that benefit from fire, with seeds that germinate and grow well in the environment after a fire (e.g. dry sclerophyll forest). Rainforest can expand in the absence of fire and contract in the presence of fire. Rainforest can even exclude fire since a low intensity fire will be less able to take hold in an environment dominated by broad, lush leaves than an open, dry woodland dominated by shrubs and trees with small, hard leaves. Rainforest and dry sclerophyll forest can exist side by

side, where the boundary between the two is not static and continually changes, though it may be over long timeframe.

Some areas in Australia have evolved in the long-term absence of fire, for example the bolster heath community on the slopes of Mount Anne in Tasmania. In these fire-sensitive communities, the interval between fires is important to the recovery of not only individual species, but the long-term persistence of the community in general. Infrequent fires allow different species to gradually recover and regenerate, including those not particularly adapted to fire. Even sphagnum moss is able to regrow after fire as evidenced by the somewhat surprising regeneration in the Victorian Alps after the 2006 wildfires, and highlights resilience in plants that may not experience fire frequently.

Another example of a species that can surprisingly regenerate after fire is the Wollemi pine. This is unexpected because the species is a conifer (usually killed by fire) and because it survives in a deep, isolated gorge in the Blue Mountains. But when fire was applied to seedlings in a glass house, they amazingly resprouted. This is significant because we consider juveniles of plants or animals to be the most vulnerable life stage. It also explains the presence of multi-stemmed adults in the wild population.

Although disturbances such as fire are natural and most plant communities have some capacity to recover; the occurrence, season and intensity of fire is changing. There are predictions that our landscape will burn more frequently with more intense fires. In addition, fire is occurring in places where it has previously been a rare phenomenon. For example, fire has historically been an infrequent occurrence in Tasmania, but fires generated by lightning strikes are predicted to increase, and this combined with a drier climate will likely result in more fires, more often which will have implications for the unique flora.

In order to appreciate our natural surroundings it helps to not only understand what they are now, but what has shaped them over time. What we see now may have been something else in the past and may be something else in the future. Perhaps we need to embrace change and understand that our lifetimes are simply a very small snapshot of a particular ecosystem - nothing remains static in nature. Above all, it highlights the need to appreciate our surroundings here and now. **W**

Michelle Kohout's new column, Wilderness [Re] generation, is named after her article appearing in Wild 98, and will provide readers with added details regarding Australia's places and plantlife.

Build your own wilderness training program

This issue, **Joe Bonington** describes how anyone can prepare for those really tough days that push you towards breaking point

Anyone who has spent some time in the outdoors will have had what I call an 'epic day'.

You know the kind – it's that day when there was an accident, or your summit time was severely underestimated, or you were caught out by the weather. Whether you prefer running, climbing, ocean kayaking or walking, everyone experiences one of these days from time-to-time.

These are the days we train for. These are the days you want to be robust, the days that you want to have the stamina to go on long after you'd planned.

To live an adventurous life, we must all train for endurance, for stamina, for robustness. To be able to keep going all day long and do the same again tomorrow. We must train to be prepared for all eventualities.

So how do we do that? Training is not just training. We can't just keep doing the same thing week after week. For us to maximise our performance we must look at our training for what it is – a stimulus to promote improved performance.

TRAINING TO IMPROVE

The process of increasing the intensity or length of training over time is called periodisation. We look at what we are planning to do, where we are at currently (i.e. what we have done the previous season? Are we fit and seasoned or de-conditioned or new to the game?), what is involved in our next project or event, and then plan over the year how to build our training so that we peak at just the right time.

In order to be effective, periodisation has to be a very carefully thought out process. Many a dream has been derailed by eager adventurers fired up and raring to go, only to go too hard in the early stages of training and either end up burnt out or injured. Any setback like this can derail an expedition.



Practical training movements are critical to long-term success. Photos: Supplied

TRAINING PHASES

Adaptive or transition phase	6-8 weeks
Base or accumulation phase	6-24 weeks
Intensification or specific phase	2-8 weeks
The taper	2-4 weeks
Event phase	2 hours to weeks
Recovery phase	2-4 weeks

I recommend you look at your year as if you were building a wall: start with the foundations, then build layer-upon-layer, never scrimping or hurrying for risk of negatively impacting the integrity the whole. These layers can be broken down into the following training 'phases'.

1. ADAPTIVE OR TRANSITION PHASE

The adaptive or transition phase is the start

of your journey. Here, we are getting ourselves moving, preparing the ligaments, joints and tendons for the work that is to follow. Slowly build during this phase.

We start this phase with mobility work; seeing what isn't moving the way it should and working out how to release it. We start moving gently: gentle runs, walks, paddles, swims etc., and for strength: one or two sessions per week of bodyweight exercises and basic calisthenics.

Our strength training during this period is based on general functional movements or what we call primal movement patterns that all primates do in some form, naturally.

There are seven basic patterns: 1. Squat 2. Lunge 3. Push 4. Pull 5. Twist 6. Hinge/Bend 7. Gait (walking, running, jumping)

2. BASE OR ACCUMULATION PHASE

This phase is by far the largest part of any training program for those going on a wilderness adventure.

Build up your aerobic base – your cardiovascular capacity (CVC). The stronger an individual's cardio capacity is, the longer they will keep going under duress. This is not trained by going as hard as we can, but by training the body to be more efficient with its energy sources.

Did you know the leanest marathon runner carries around 100,000 calories in stored fuel in the form of fat, but only 2000 calories in the form of glycogen from carbohydrates? Given that we keep on having to replenish glycogen, we need to become fat burning machines to be efficient, rather than constantly trying to top ourselves up with external fuels in the forms of gels, snacks etc. Yes we will use these external sources when we need to, but let's train ourselves to work better and more efficiently first.

Building on the primal patterns mentioned

SAMPLE WEEK - BASE PHASE - GOAL: DUSKY TRACK NZ

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
REST	Run/Walk - light pack, medium pace, mixed terrain, 1 hour at 75% max HR	General Strength Training - primal patterns, 1 hour	Run/Walk - light pack, medium pace, mixed terrain, 1 hour at 75% max HR	REST	General Strength Training - primal patterns, 1 hour
	Stretch, mobilise 20 mins	Stretch, mobilise 20 mins	Stretch, mobilise 20 mins		Stretch, mobilise 20 mins
Total Training time: 9hr 40 mins					

SIMPLIFIED PHASE STRUCTURE - ADVENTURE SPORTS

Adventure Sport	Base	Specific Phase
Non Technical Mountaineering	Sub-max running, general strength training	Heavy pack march, loaded hill climbs, sand and/or ski work, energy system training
Polar Exploration	Sub-max running, general strength training	Tyre dragging, sand and ski work, energy system training
Trekking/Hiking/Multi day Bushwalking	General hiking and/or sub-max running, general strength training	Hills, heavy pack march, energy system training
MTB	Big rides, general strength training	Technical hill repeats, speed work, energy system training
Trail/Ultra/sky running	Sub-max running, general strength training	Hills, intervals, fartlek, race pace, sand and ski work, energy system training
Kayak	Long paddles, general strength training	Sprints/intervals/surf work, energy system training
Back Country Ski/board	Sub-max running, general strength training	Heavy pack march, loaded hill climbs/isometric work, energy system training

in the previous phase, we then add load in the form of weight for some of the exercises. During the base phase we start applying 'Pareto's principle', or the 80/20 rule: 80 per cent of our training is building our CVC and 20 per cent is building strength.

Their risk here is getting excited and wanting to get to the part where we are pushing the envelope and yes, that may feel satisfying after we've done it and give us that endorphin rush of achievement, but has it elicited the training response we want? Is it contributing to our overall improvement in performance? Not if we are doing it at the wrong time or doing it too often.

If we push ourselves to the limit too often we will plateau or de-train.

3. INTENSIFICATION OR SPECIFIC PHASE

Now, this is where we get to do the fun stuff.

This part of our training is where we take a close look at the components of our chosen sport itself and how we can 'overload' our training with stimulus that will have a similar effect as to whatever adventure or wilderness sport we are throwing ourselves into.

This is where we load heavy packs or mountain bike hard slopes. It is where we do max-effort hill repeats when running.

Our strength training program changes as

we start to condition different energy systems. We lift the intensity, markedly. This is the cement that will hold our wall together.

4. THE TAPER

This is usually two-to-four weeks from departure to our wilderness experience. We start to back off both load and intensity.

Don't make the mistake of stopping; equally, don't just keep training at the level that you have for fear of losing fitness.

Take the foot off the accelerator and allow yourself more time to recover, let that amazing body of yours do its thing: catch up on itself, strengthen and fortify. A well-timed taper means you will start your wilderness adventure feeling ready to take on the world. Your body is strong, your energy systems tuned and ready to deliver, your joints and soft tissue flexible and mobile. You are ready to go!

5. EVENT PHASE

This can be a few hours (mountain marathon) or weeks (crossing the Greenland ice shelf) depending on what your adventure is.

Time to deliver – this is the culmination of your exciting journey. You have trained to be the best you can be, just you and the surrounding environment. Focus on your

challenge, your surroundings. Being able to be 'in sync' with the world and maintain mindfulness will increase your performance, enjoyment and it will also help keep you safe.

6. RECOVERY PHASE

Chill! The length of recovery depends on the demands of your experience.

As expected, the more physically challenging your event phase was, the longer the recovery phase should be. This is a time to do more gentle activities and take a break from your given wilderness sport.

Recharge the batteries and cross train. Many can find this challenging and don't give themselves adequate recovery time, which is a real shame. Not only does it allow the body to recover but also, a break from what we love also helps us remember why we love it in the first place.

FURTHER READING

Training for The New Alpinism: A Manual for The Climber as Athlete - Steve House and Scott Johnston. This fantastic text is fast becoming a bible for those who wish to train for an alpine ascent. What's great about this book is that its principles are principles and these can be applied to virtually any wilderness sport. If you want to dig deeper into all the aspects I've talked about, definitely buy this book.

Periodisation, Theory and Methodology of Training - Tudor Bompa, G. Gregory Haff. A classic for the training nerd. Now in its fifth edition. If you want to really geek out as to how and why periodisation works this is the book. Any strength and conditioning coaches worth their salt will have this as a resource. [W](#)



Joe Benington is a strength and conditioning expert, specialising in wilderness adventure activities and expeditions. As the owner of Joe's Basecamp Gym on Sydney's

northern beaches, he's able to share his experience with new generations of outdoor enthusiasts and invites you to contact him with suggestions for future topics for his columns, or any specific questions you may have.



joe@joesbasecamp.com.au

SAMPLE WEEK - INTENSIFICATION PHASE - GOAL: DUSKY TRACK NZ

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
AM	REST	Run/Walk - light pack, medium pace, mixed terrain, 1 hour at 75% max HR	Heavy Pack Hill Repeats - HARD 1 Hour	REST	REST	Run/Walk - light pack, medium pace, mixed terrain, 1-2 hours at 75% max HR
PM	REST	REST	Strength Training - Focus on core and stability, 45 mins	Run/Walk - light pack, medium pace, mixed terrain, 1 hour at 75% max HR	High intensity, mixed modality workout: 20 mins	REST
		Stretch, mobilise 20 mins	Stretch, mobilise 20 mins	Stretch, mobilise 20 mins	Stretch, mobilise 20 mins	Stretch, mobilise 20 mins
Total Training time: 13 Hours						

Prusiks for rescue

Continuing the theme of the humble Prusik, *Stuart Matheson* discusses practical applications in rescue for this special-purpose knot



Prusik set up and ready to hoist.
Photos: Stuart Matheson



Prusiks together, it's time to reset.

Sometimes things don't go to plan, sometimes we find ourselves in situations we have tried to avoid, but then need to deal with regardless.

As climbers, or generally as outdoor enthusiasts, we become accustomed to changing conditions and the need to be adaptable, if things go a little wrong when we are on the side of a crag it becomes very important that we are able to utilise our adaptability in order to solve problems and improvise a rescue.

There was a time when we went into outdoor adventure environments and had a very clear idea that we had to be self sufficient. We were very aware that the only realistic way to summon outside help, if required, was to remove ourselves from the situation and make our way to the closest house, town or area of civilisation (the standard communications plan at the time being to carry sufficient change to make use of the nearest public payphone).

Thankfully, there have been many communications advances since my early years of outdoor adventure, even with modern equipment though, such as mobile phones, PLB's (Personal Locator Beacons), satellite phones etc. external help and rescue can still be a significant time away.

At the very least we should have the capability to stabilise the situation, preventing further risk until outside assistance arrives. For more routine situations we should have the ability to solve the problem in order to prevent it

escalating and requiring external help.

It is at these times that we once again reach for our less modern, though very useful, Prusik cords.

SELF RESCUE

Imagine you are lead climbing a route. All is going well, the protection you are placing is good and you feel confident. Then a hold breaks, causing you to fall off, which leaves you dangling in space and unable to regain contact with the rock.

Or perhaps you abseil into a climb (on a sea cliff or alike). Once at the base, you realise you are not on the correct route, the route you are faced with is not within your ability.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

One possible solution to both of these problems would be to make your way back up by ascending the rope. Unfortunately, despite what you may have seen Batman do on television when you were a child, climbing up a rope hand-over-hand is not really viable and certainly not very safe. However, a relatively safe and effective way to do it is to use a pair of Prusik loops to grip the rope for us.

The process is fairly simple: tie one Prusik loop (the Classic or Klemheist as described in issue 151 are very effective) around the rope and attach it to the abseil loop of your harness with a karabiner. Take a second Prusik and tie it around the rope below the first one. To this, attach a short sling to use as a foot loop.

We are now set up to ascend the rope. By standing up in the foot loop, you will remove your weight from the waist Prusik, allowing you to push it up higher. Then sit into the harness (putting weight back on the waist Prusik), which will remove the weight from the foot Prusik, thereby allowing you to slide that one higher. Repeat this process until we have ascended high enough (see ascending set up photograph).

One last sensible addition to this system is to give yourself a solid attachment to the rope (relying solely on Prusiks is not a good idea). You can do this by putting a karabiner on the abseil loop and attaching it to the rope with a clove hitch – this gives us a backup that can be easily adjusted as you ascend.

RESCUING OTHERS

Imagine you climbed a route (without falling off this time). It was at the limit of your ability, but you made it up and you are now at the belay bringing up a less experienced partner. Unfortunately, no matter how tight you get their rope they are unable to pull through the crux move.

Or perhaps your second is attempting to move through an overlap and they fall. They end up hanging in space below the overlap unable to regain contact with the rock.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

In both these situations we need to raise our partner a few metres to allow them to get past the crux or regain hold of the rock face. Unless your partner is very small (or you are incredibly strong), it is unlikely that you will be able to simply pull them up.

One approach would be to create a system to give us a mechanical advantage.

The way to achieve this is to convert our belay system into a simple three-to-one pulley system (sometimes referred to as an un-assisted hoist or Z-drag). To do this you will need to place a Prusik (a French Prusik works well) on the live rope just in front of the belay device and clip it back to the focal point of the anchor (this Prusik will allow rope to slide through the belay device as we take rope in, but will prevent rope from paying out).

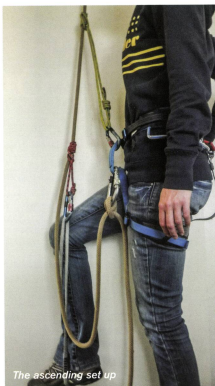
Next, place another Prusik on the live rope with a karabiner. Clip the control rope through that karabiner, which creates a distinctive Z shape in the rope.

Now you are set up to raise your partner. Push the lowest Prusik as far down the rope as possible, then pull on the free end of the control rope. The mechanical advantage created should make raising your partner easier – as you pull rope through, the Z shape will become smaller and the Prusiks will get closer together.

Once the Prusiks get between five to ten centimetres apart, you'll need to reset the system. Push the Prusik that is just in front of the belay device down the rope so that it engages and holds the load. You should then be able to push the lower Prusik as far down as possible and start again. Repeat the process until your partner is raised to the required level (see hoist photographs).

It may be that in order to set this system up you'll need to 'tie off' your belay device in order to get your hands free to attach the Prusiks (tying off a belay device is a skill in itself, one we'll possibly look at another time), as when belaying normally it is important that when you are operating your hoist system you always maintain a hand on the control rope.

The systems described and pictured above are single examples of solving relatively simple problems. There are many variations and changes that can be made depending on the context of the situation. A clear



The ascending set up

understanding of the principles is crucial, as real-life situations are rarely exactly as practised – there are many variables involved – and therefore there is generally some adaptability and improvisation required.

IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER:

- Nothing you do should make the situation less safe for those involved
- An unconscious or immobile person hanging in a harness is in a very serious situation
- Prusik cords are hugely useful, but they are only a loop of small diameter cord gripping the rope through friction, do not hang yourself or anyone else from only a Prusik (they can and do slip), have a solid back up attachment to the rope
- The best resource available to you is your knowledge, skill and experience. "Figuring it out" in a real situation is not an effective way to learn new skills compared to practise in a controlled environment

Outdoor adventure is good for everybody and it's important you have fun while doing it. As always however, seek professional advice and practice in areas of low consequence.

Operated by Stuart Matheson, Adventure Training Consultants provides training, coaching, guiding and technical advice services for all aspects of outdoor education and adventure activities throughout Australia.

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Montara Boot

Ahnu

Base camp cooking

Andrew Davison provides some recipes to consider when ingredient weight isn't an issue

Each year my knees grow wearier, the twinges and twitches of my back occur more often, and the loads I am carrying are only getting heavier (mostly due to the ever increasing weight of a rapidly growing toddler). Although the spirit to maintain the distances, remoteness and ruggedness of my youthful walks remain, I have finally arrived at the conclusion that there is no shame in taking it a bit easier. Moreover, there is quite a satisfying feeling in returning to an established base camp after a lengthy day walk, knowing that there is beer chilled in the Esky and the nightly meals ingredients can be fresh, heavy and of optimum quality ready for a delicious campfire meal. Base camping for a lengthy period of time still requires one to use ingredients with an extended shelf life, below I have outlined two dishes that are suited to base camp cooking when weight is not an issue.

VEGETABLE TAGINE

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

1 onion
2 potatoes
1 zucchini
1 carrot
1 tomato
Any other suitable vegetable that you like such as pumpkin, capsicum, green beans, mushrooms
2 cloves of garlic
2 teaspoons of cumin powder
1 teaspoon of paprika
½ bunch of coriander (optional)
salt and pepper
1/3 cup of good olive oil

METHOD

Slice the onion into ½ centimetre width rings and lay the slices on the base of a large pot that has a tight fitting lid. Now slice the potatoes, zucchini, carrot and any other vegetable you wish to add into one-centimetre thick slices. Beginning with potatoes followed by carrots, then zucchini, layer the vegetables evenly in the pot occasionally sprinkling with the spice, finely chopped garlic, salt and pepper and chopped coriander if using, between the layers of vegetables. Complete the process until all the vegetables are used. Finally top with the sliced tomato and remaining spices. Now pour ½ cup of water over the vegetables followed by the oil. Place the tight lid on the pot and allow to slowly cook over a low heat occasionally checking that a little water remains. It is ready when the potatoes are tender. Serve with a good bread or fire baked damper or simply over-prepared couscous.



VEGETABLE PULAO

- 1 cup rice (preferably basmati)
- 1 small onion finely chopped
- 2 cloves of garlic finely chopped
- 1 cinnamon quill
- 2 bay leaves
- 6 cardamom pods
- 6 cloves
- ¼ teaspoon turmeric
- 1 teaspoon coriander
- 1 potato
- 1 carrot
- 6-8 green beans chopped into 1-centimetre pieces (or ¼ of a cup of fresh or dried peas rehydrated).
- 1 teaspoon garam masala

METHOD

Dice the vegetables into one-centimetre cubes, wash the rice until the water runs clear and set aside. Heat two tablespoons of oil in a large pot with a tight fitting lid and fry onion over medium heat for 4-5 minutes. Now add the garlic followed by the cardamom, cloves, cinnamon, bay leaves, Coriander and turmeric and fry for a further minute. Add vegetables and fry for a further 4-5 minutes. Spread the vegetables evenly over the base of the pan, then spread the washed rice evenly over the vegetables, sprinkle with the garam masala and salt and pepper. Gently pour in two cups of water, cover with a tight fitting lid and simmer until rice is cooked.

Serve on its own or with unleavened bread, a dollop of yoghurt and a smear of Zhoug (Zhoug recipe in *Wild* issue 152).

Andrew Davison takes pleasure in the simplicity of being in the bush. A world traveller and culinary connoisseur, he has become a regular *Wild* contributor.



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1 New Bushshirt \$119.95

A perennial favourite from Mont, the Bushshirt has been relaunched with the same 100-weight Polartec Micro Fleece, an updated cut, contoured neck for better coverage and Polartec Power Dry fabric on the hem and cuffs. www.mont.com.au

2 Go-Stow Jacket \$65.99

At 239g (size L), this stowable jacket is constructed of waterproof (2000mm) polyester PU. The back yoke provides added breathability in this unisex design. www.rainbirdclothing.com.au

3 UnEEK \$179.95

The new sandal style from Keen, these shoes are constructed out of just two, interwoven cords, a heel and tongue piece and the sole. www.keenfootwear.com.au

4 Pro-Elite Baselayer Long Sleeve Crew \$99.95

Constructed from Thermolite, nylon and spandex, this baselayer top includes reinforced knit zones for added insulation and durability while weighing less than 200g. www.mountaindesigns.com

5 Clothing Wash + Repel 300ml \$33.95

This fluorocarbon-free cleaning product from Granger's helps you maintain your trusty outdoor kit. Machine safe, it's heat activated so clothing will need to be tumble dried (or ironed) for full effect. www.seatosummitdistribution.com.au

6 Escape Large Capacity Pack \$529.95

This top-loading pack from Mont offers capacities from 65-75L, constructed from Infinity Corespun Canvas. Dual compartments with highly adjustable harness, water bladder compatible and plenty of gear attachment points. www.mont.com.au

7 Flash Java Kit \$219.95

This Jetboil coffee press packs to the size of a water bottle and provides two cups of boiling water in just over 2 minutes. Ideal for coffee, soups or freeze-dried meals. www.seatosummitdistribution.com.au

8 Nocturne 15 \$599.95

Nemo's 3-season sleeping bag includes its unique 'spoon' shape, 750 Fill Power Downtek down, 20D nylon outer and weighs in at just over 1kg. www.paddyallin.com.au

9 Explorer Eco Long Sleeve Shirt \$129.95

Part of Berghaus's Colourkind range, this garment uses 89% less water and chemicals than in traditional production processes. It also boasts UPF 50+ sun protection and an anti-bacterial treatment to prevent odours. www.mountaindesigns.com

10 Poco AGPremium \$449.95

Osprey's experience in pack design is best expressed in this baby carrier, which features ample padding and ventilation for both child and the wearer. The premium version includes a removable 11L daypack and changing pad. www.ospreypacks.com

11 SolarPanel 5+ \$149.95

2 hours of sunlight is enough to provide 6Wh of energy through this solar panel from BioLite. Charge your phone, camera or other accessories while in the field. www.seatosummitdistribution.com.au

12 Black Hole Duffel 90L \$179.95

Designed for alpine climbers, river guides and ski patrollers, this duffel bag from Patagonia is constructed from 15oz, 900D polyester ripstop with a TPU-film laminate and DWR finish. Bluesign approved. www.patagonia.com.au



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13 Cometallite Headlamp \$79.95

Weighing 50g without batteries, this headlamp from Edelrid is rated to IPX5 and features 3 brightness levels, maxing out at 165 lumens. Designed with mountaineers and trail runners in mind. www.expeditionequipment.com.au

14 Girl's Appledore Jacket \$115.99

Waterproof (8000mm) and breathable (5000mvp) while weighing in at 458g, this jacket includes a hood, chest and hand pockets as well as a quilted lining for added warmth. www.gondwanaoutdoor.com.au

15 Torrentshell Pants \$119.95

Packable rain protection that is designed to pull on easily over boots, made from a 100% recycled nylon face, a waterproof/breathable barrier and finished with DWR, keeping your legs dry in wet weather. www.patagonia.com.au

16 Reinsfjell 2 \$1099

The new Helaport line of tents has arrived in Australia, including this 3-season, 2-person hiking tent that comes complete with two doors on a 3-pole frame. www.tomsooutdoors.com.au

17 Clip+ Speaker \$79.95

Portable, splashproof, clip-on speaker offering 5 hours of playtime with Bluetooth and audio line-in options. Ideal for climbers. www.jbhifi.com.au

18 Mil Tac M.U.L.E. 3L \$229.95

One of CamelBak's bestselling packs, it includes the military spec bladder with wide-mouth opening and patented bite valve inside a rugged, 500D ripstop Cordura fabric, 8L pack. www.seaotosummitdistribution.com.au

19 Blocker Drysack 30L \$49.95

Featuring a rectangular shape and strong, fully welded seam construction, this Blocker waterproof dry sack from SealLine aims to be the solution for organising and protecting gear. www.spelean.com.au

20 Taipain 10mm from \$199.95

Available in 50, 60 and 70m lengths, this rope from Edelrid is made from excess yarn left over in rope production, improving sustainability in manufacture. Each rope is therefore unique in pattern and colour. www.expeditionequipment.com.au

21 Basecamp 2 Ultra Dry BcII \$699

Sea to Summit's warmest (750+ loft), driest sleeping bag integrated with the brand's Air Sprung Cell sleeping mats and Aeros Pillows to create the complete sleeping system with full length dual zips. www.seaotosummit.com.au

22 Stretch Rainshadow Jacket \$319.95

A lightweight, packable rain jacket that features a helmet-compatible hood with laminated visor, watertight front zip and ventilation pit zips. It stuffs into its own chest pocket for simple storage. www.patagonia.com.au

23 York Vest \$135.99

Urban-style vest insulated with 100% recycled synthetic micro-fibre down and nylon outer shell. Weighs in at 453g (size L) and includes a fleece-lined chin guard. www.gondwanaoutdoor.com.au

24 Fusion Jacket \$399.95

A mid-weight, high-performance down jacket from Mont. Designed to be water resistant and highly breathable it includes 750+ loft down in boxwalled baffles, which improve warmth and weight. www.mont.com.au

TRIED AND TESTED

Lighting options for a tent or small campsite have evolved beyond the days of headlamps, torches and gas lanterns. Here's a selection of lightweight options to consider packing

INTRODUCTION

It's an ongoing point of contention in adventure circles: what gadgets are appropriate to pack on an extended journey?

For some, the issue is one of minimisation. The less electrical equipment carried, the better. After all, isn't the point of stepping out into the wild about escaping the trappings of modern life? Humans are perfectly capable of survival for long

periods of time with next to nothing in terms of technology. For these rugged explorers, all they need to be comfortable is appropriate clothing, a pocketknife, adequate hydration and nourishment.

But that's one extreme end of the scale. On the other end, we have the tech-loaded adventurer. Perhaps they're a professional photographer or documentarian of some kind. Perhaps they're conducting scientific research of some kind. This person

must find a way to carry and charge a personal locator beacon, camera(s), and lighting and perhaps even satellite devices for phone and Internet.

Most people lie somewhere in between these two extremes and that's probably a good thing. Those in the middle of the bell curve get to enjoy the best of technological innovation in outdoor gear, and that's particularly evident when it comes to lighting solutions.

Model	Max brightness (lumens)	Battery	Charging time	Max run time	Charge out?	Solar included?	Weight (g)	Price
Biolite PowerLight	200	Li-ion	3 hours	72 hours	✓	✗	210	\$139.95
Black Diamond Moji Charging Station	250	Li-ion or 4 x AA	8 hours	150 hours	✓	✗	334	\$159.95
Black Diamond Moji XP	150	3 x AA	N/A	120 hours	✗	✗	232	\$54.95
Goal Zero Lighthouse 250	250	Li-ion	7 hours	48 hours	✓	✗	498	\$109.00
Goal Zero Lighthouse Mini	210	Li-ion	4 hours	500 hours	✓	✗	226.8	\$109.00
Mpowered Luci Outdoor	50	Li-ion	7 hours	12 hours	✗	✓	125	\$24.95
Princeton Tec Helix Basecamp Rechargeable	250	Li-ion or 3 x AA	3-4 hours	22 hours	✓	✗	313	\$159.95
Princeton Tec Helix Backcountry	150	3 x AAA	N/A	32 hours	✗	✗	155	\$79.95

Photos: Campbell Phillips

It wasn't so long ago that the concept of a camping lantern or lamp meant a bulky, gas-powered item that was either unsuitable for use inside of a tent, or couldn't be left unattended for fear of lighting a fire. However, with ongoing innovation in battery technology, solar and with the advent of high-powered LEDs replacing traditional globes, now there are many options to choose from that are lightweight and provide superior lighting over long periods of time.

NOTES

On durability – In this round of Tried and Tested, we have not attempted to test these products for their durability or ruggedness. It is expected that these devices would not generally be subjected to major impacts or submersion, however

where water resistance ratings have been provided in the form of an ingress protection (IP) rating, we've made note of these in the general product review.

On batteries – The initial charge of a lithium ion battery such as those used in these lanterns is generally the longest charge, and that is the time we have listed in our table. You may find that after this initial charge the device reaches capacity much faster. However, battery performance can be impacted by temperature, use and age, therefore both run times and time to charge should only be considered as rough estimates. It's also worth highlighting that all rechargeable batteries will eventually fail, meaning that if longevity is a priority for the user, you may wish to consider those options that have alternative power sources.

On test conditions – We tested the featured lights, lanterns and lamps over several evenings in early autumn. Unfortunately, the weather was mild and didn't drop below five degrees overnight, nor was it warmer than 25 throughout the day. As such, we can assume the electricals would have been performing optimally for the entire time. Testing was therefore restricted to considering the various features and benefits of each model, and comparing them against each other to ascertain any differences in build quality. As always, each product may have specific application for a certain type of user and therefore we've avoided making subjective statements about whether we felt any is 'better' overall.

BIOLITE

The US-based brand BioLite is focused on creating solutions that reduce our dependence on traditional energy sources, grouping their products into three major categories: cooking, charging and lighting solutions. For this round of tests, we trialled the BioLite PowerLight, designed to form the core of what the brand calls their 'NanoGrid' solution. The concept of the NanoGrid is to offer a lighting solution that could scale up from a small room or a whole-home lighting solution – even if it is a temporary one. In order to do this, the NanoGrid would include at least the PowerLight and several 'SiteLights', which are daisy-chained together (and offer 150 lumens each). While the bundle would certainly be a great option for campers and the SiteLights only weigh 52 grams apiece, our focus has instead been to review the standalone PowerLight on its own, making it easier to compare with the other alternatives.

1. PowerLight

The PowerLight offers the dual functionality of a torch (250 lumens) and a lantern (200 lumens) and either or both can be switched on at any given time. The torch wouldn't replace a high-powered headlamp or standalone torch, but it would be handy for finding your way in the dark regardless. The light quality offered by the lantern is warm and bright with BioLite claiming it's been designed to mimic daylight. As with some of the other devices tested, the Li-ion battery also acts as a 'power bank' for other devices you might carry with you, providing backup power for your phone or camera via a USB port. It also charges relatively quickly via a micro-USB to USB cable. A 's-hook' allows the device to be hung easily from a loop, or to stand in various configurations on a flat surface. The device claims to be water resistant, but no IP rating is given.

MPOWERD

Similar to BioLite, Mpowerd is a US company that touts its social responsibility as its central motivation. The business has grown around its founding product – the Luci inflatable solar light, which is the original iteration of the device we tested in this review. The uniqueness of this device makes it stand out among the others we've trialled, but as always, that doesn't make it the best product for every user.

4. Luci Outdoor

Mpowerd describes this light as being designed for adventure, but really it's not terribly different from other lighting options in its range. Being inflatable, it collapses down to a disc that's just a couple of centimetres tall, with a rectangular solar panel on one side, and a set of 10 LEDs on the other, each capable of emitting 50 lumens at its brightest setting. It's also the only device we tested that claims an IP67 waterproof rating, and it certainly seems suitable for floating across a small pond or otherwise (should you ever have reason to). Maybe not the brightest or full-featured product, it certainly ticks the boxes for affordability, lightweight and solar in a way that none of the others we've trialled do.

BLACK DIAMOND

As a company, Black Diamond produces a wide variety of equipment for climbers and skiers and has been doing so for over half a century. While lighting may not be considered a 'core' category for the brand, it has been performing well in this space for some time, perhaps best known for its range of headlamps. Recent innovations in technology have since seen the company produce a number of lanterns that have become available in a variety of colours. While larger, car-camping options are available; we found the 'Mojito' range to be most suited to more lightweight adventures, and were provided two models to compare.

2. Moji Charging Station

The Moji Charging Station emits up to 250 lumens at its maximum setting, powered by the built-in Li-ion battery that is also designed to be capable of charging other devices via a USB port (hence the name). The true power of the device lies in its ability to also take AA batteries, which may add further weight to the device, but also provides further flexibility (and AA batteries will allow for a run time much longer than that provided by the built-in battery). Two metal hooks at the top of the lantern allow it to be hung, but it can also be seated nicely on a flat surface either up or down. Unlike the BioLite option, the light created by this lantern is cooler, similar to that emitted by a standard fluorescent tube. A water resistance rating of IPX4 means it should withstand heavy weather and splashing, but it wouldn't be recommended to submerge the lantern for any significant period of time.

3. Moji XP

The Moji XP is a souped up version of the original Moji lantern. A more compact, lightweight design than the Charging Station, this lantern lacks the built-in rechargeable battery, and instead relies three AA batteries (unfortunately not included). For this reason, we've listed its weight as including the removable batteries, whereas this was not the case for the Charging Station. While it offers 150 lumens at maximum, this is still sufficient to light a tent or small campsite. Otherwise, this device is very similar in appearance, light quality and build to its larger sibling, even offering the same water resistance rating.



6

5

GOAL ZERO

Specialising in solar panels and related accessories, Goal Zero is a relatively young company based out of the US. It's specifically an outdoors brand, and that should speak towards its products' abilities to take a beating, but it's this brand's expertise in solar powered products that makes them particularly interesting. While neither of the products we tested had an out-of-the-box solar option, they are easily partnered with Goal Zero's wide range of solar panels.

5. Lighthouse 250

The bulkiest of the lanterns we tested, this product lends itself to a car camping or a base camp scenario, offering 250 lumens at its maximum setting. The traditional lantern format includes two fold out legs, allowing it to be raised off a flat surface. Lighting models include a single direction or both directions, controlled by a dial that locks in the off position to prevent accidental activation. Like the Black Diamond lanterns, the Goal Zero products emit a cool, white light. There's also an emergency red flashing light around the top rim of the device. Perhaps the most interesting feature of this device is the hand crank, which allows the user to charge the device manually with an output of 10 minutes of light for every minute of cranking, at 120 rotations per minute. In conjunction with its ability to charge other devices, this lantern offers a particularly interesting proposition for anyone with the space to pack it.

6. Lighthouse Mini

The smaller sibling of the Lighthouse 250, this device is relatively new to the market but is already providing to be popular among bushwalkers and lightweight campers of all stripes. At maximum, 210 lumens is incredibly powerful for the size of the unit, while on its lowest setting it's said to last for up to 500 hours. Including a top loop and semicircular hook, it will hang from anything, but also includes a similar foldaway stand to its larger alternative. Unfortunately the stand may represent a minor point of weakness, as we found it hard to stand on its foldaway legs on any surface that wasn't quite flat and stable, which may be as a result of it being a little top heavy in this configuration. Nevertheless, it will stand just fine with the legs folded away on a less than even surface. Lacking the crank feature, it still has the ability to charge other devices.

PRINCETON TEC

This brand has been specialising in outdoor lighting solutions since 1975 and therefore deserves a special place in our trials. More well-known for its torches and headlamps, these new lantern alternatives from Princeton Tec feel somewhat experimental in their form, but nevertheless practical in the way the technology has been applied.

7. Helix Basecamp Rechargeable

A new take on the traditional lantern shape, both Helix models feature a collapsible globe section that folds down to about half its standing height, allowing it to be packed more easily. Along these lines, the legs (each one acting as a potential hook in its own right) also fold away underneath the device for storage purposes. Hooks and a detachable handle can be found at the top of the device. The Basecamp version is larger and emits a brighter light, which can be switched from white to red (the red light uses less energy, and is generally considered less obtrusive to wildlife), and also locks in the off position to prevent accidentally turning it on. Perhaps the greatest feature of this model is the removable Li-ion battery, which makes it fairly unique for the category. If this battery were to die, or if you needed back up power, it's a simple case of taking along additional batteries. This is slightly different to the Black Diamond Moji Charging station, where the Li-ion unit isn't removable. This lantern can also be used to charge other devices.

Helix Backcountry (not pictured)

A smaller version of the Basecamp, it doesn't feature the rechargeable Li-ion battery, or the ability to charge other devices. It still has all the other features, which are worth expanding on here. The foldable legs, as described previously, feature hooks that will allow easy attachment by webbing or cordage to allow for hanging this lantern horizontally (as opposed to hanging it or standing it in a normal, vertical orientation). The collapsible rubber globe of these devices also features a 'glow in the dark' treatment, so that even after the light is switched off, it will continue to glow a soft green colour so that it can be easily located without expending additional power.



Further alternatives to consider

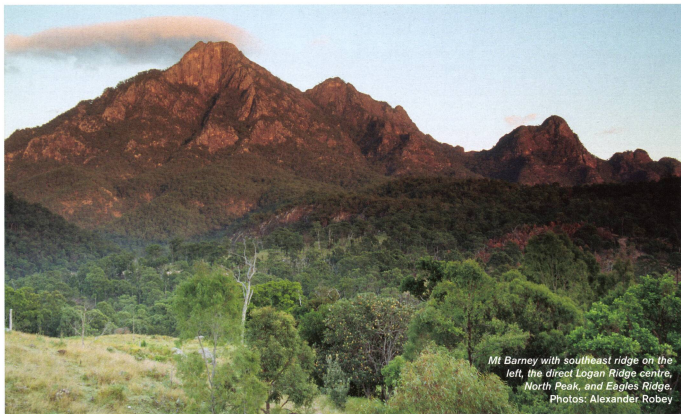
As usual, we haven't been able to test every unit on the market in this category as a result of timing and availability. However, here are a further two options that may be worth looking into.

8. Edelrid Bodhi (\$99.95) – A 90-gram light that emits up to 185 lumens at its brightest setting that will last up to 200 hours on its emergency low flash setting.

9. Snowpeak Mini Hozuki (\$89.95) – a clip-on light that emits up to 60 lumens with optional AAA batteries or rechargeable Li-ion option. Emergency strobe setting lasts up to 180 hours.

Mount Barney

Whether for the views, hiking or even a dip in a picturesque natural pool, *Alexander Robey* believes Mount Barney National Park is an adventurer's playground



Mt Barney with southeast ridge on the left, the direct Logan Ridge centre, North Peak, and Eagles Ridge.
Photos: Alexander Robey

The magic of Mount Barney weaved its wand to cement the region as my favourite place to explore in southeast Queensland when I guided a group of teenagers on a 'wilderness rites of passage' journey. On a misty summit morning, broken spectres caused by diffracting light formed perfect circular rainbows with body silhouettes cast into the centre. The phenomena was rare and spectacular. For many days, sheer masses of rock and vertical faces posed a significant challenge, yet many achievable routes revealed stunning panorama views. Clear, flowing creeks provided natural water worlds with spectacular

smoothed boulders in coloured formations as we rock hopped like the brush tail rock wallabies along the foothills. Open eucalypt forests, bottlebrush and natives shrubs flowered to live the sweetest of forest aromas and fed the robins, honeyeaters and parrots that chirped through the valleys. Wild orchards flowered as they clung to cracks on granite-like granophyre. A glance into an ancient world transpired with the Antarctic beech trees in the more remote peaks of the western flanks of the park. Whether for a day out or several days on a through hike, there is a wonder

to the region that appropriately has made it a mecca for outdoor enthusiasts. I've enjoyed the region for over a quarter of a century. The Yungabeh People enjoyed the region before Captain Logan was the first recorded person to scale the 1354 metres in 1828. Mount Barney consists of East and West Peaks and the national park holds Mount Ernest, the wedding cake shaped Mount Lindsay, Mount Maroon, Mount May and Mount Ballow, without mentioning dozens of other significant peaks. While not the highest peak in southeast Queensland, Mount Barney is arguably the most impressive.

ACCESS AND PARK INFORMATION

From Brisbane, the eastern routes of Mount Barney are best assessed via the Mount Lindsay Highway, through the township of Rathdowney along the Boonah-Rathdowney Road, Barney View and Upper Logan Roads to the Lower Portal track car park, or the road end at Yellow Pinch day area. Mount Barney Lodge provides

camping and facilities for those base camping to assess the National Park. Big Riggan and Flanagan's campgrounds a few kilometres up the road provides great camping. To access Mount Lindsay, follow the highway to the border gate, which is usually the best option to start the hike. Mount Ernest is accessed from Yellow Pinch.

To assess the western region, from Brisbane follow the Ipswich motorway to the township of Boonah, then the Boonah-Rathdowney Rd, Burnett Creek Road and then Waterfall Creek Road. The dirt road for two wheel drive vehicles stops at the base of Mount May, however those with 4WD can access the ridge track in dry weather to Cleared Ridge. To access Mount

Maroon, follow the Boonah-Rathdowney Road and take the Cotswold turnoff on a dirt road.

WARNINGS

Mount Barney National Park like many national parks within an easy drive from a city can lure hikers into a false sense of security. Even on a clear day, the Brisbane high-rise buildings dot the horizon just over an hour's drive away, yet still the rugged region poses many threats. In summer, bush fires are a real risk and fire danger alerts need a check before setting off. Exposed rocky ridges radiate heat and with the beating sun, hikers are at risk to heat stroke, dehydration, hyperthermia and severe sunburn. The UV index regularly reaches extreme in summer. Summer storms with spectacular lightning displays are a visual delight and best avoided on exposed vantage spots.

Mount Barney creek is a major catchment fed from many creeks and gorges. It rapidly floods after rain. In winter, the temperature can drop below zero and the wind's bite can leave unprepared hikers hypothermic. Each year it is common to find frozen water crystal stalactites, an unexpected finding for southeast Queensland. Mount Lindsay in its wedding cake shape is treacherous with loose rock and steep, exposed cliffs, while Mount Maroon can become busy and impatient hikers can dislodge rocks. Many hikers become disoriented in white out conditions and spend a cold, miserable night out.

Snakes are prevalent in summer and hikers need to be aware of the health risks of ticks and the management of these. A recent, accurate weather forecast, fire warning and updated track information from Parks and Wildlife are invaluable in deciding to venture out, and is knowing how to manage in the conditions.

WHEN TO GO

While visiting the region year-round is possible and enjoyable, the best routes will change for each season. Carrying a pack for a multi-day trip, or hiking the hot ridges in summer may be possible; they're just more enjoyable in winter or the fringe seasons. A summer trip to the many rocks pools for a swim on a more relaxed day out is best. Even a hot summer day will contrast nice with the frigid creeks. In wet weather, the exposed rocky climbs and extreme hikes become slippery and best avoided. In spring, the wildflowers burst to steal the attention away from the dramatic peaks. When is the best time to go? It's always a good time to go, it's more a question of which part is best at any given time of year!

MAPS AND REFERENCES

While few tracks are signposted, generally follow a track on the major walks. Unless you are intentionally "exploring", losing the track will inevitable cause trouble for yourself and emergency services.

Mount Lindsay Map 9441-31. 1:25000 and Queensland National Parks PDF map.

Secrets of the Scenic Rim by Robert Rankin, 2nd Edition, 2015.

Take a Walk John and Lyn Daly, 2002.

www.npsr.qld.gov.au/parks/mount-barney for

campsite booking within the park and updates

Mt Barney Lodge: www.mtbarneylodge.com.au

Big Rigger Camp ground: www.bigrigger.com.au.

Flanagan Reserve: www.flanaganreserve.com.au

The Scenic Rim Regional Council manages

Waterfall Creek campsite at the base of

Mount May.



www.scenicrim.qld.gov.au

THE WALK

DAY WALKS

1. Lower Portals

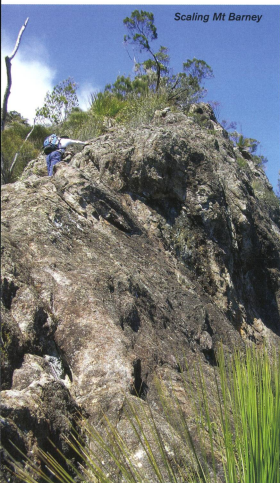
A great summer walk follows a graded track 3.7 kilometres to the Lower Portals at Mount

Barney Creek. Grass trees and eucalypt dot the landscape, and a sandstone knoll is a natural sign to say "almost there". While the gullies and hills aren't steep, it's best to avoid the heat of the day in summer. At Barney Creek, rock hop across the creek and continue upstream. The portals are accessed through a small cave at the end of the track at the foot of a hill. If you hike over the hill for spectacular views of Leaning Peak and Mount Barney, the creek above the portals is descended on a track. Barney waterfall is three kilometres upstream. While it is dry more of the time, there are great natural rockslides in the creek. Retrace your steps to return. Allow one hour each way from the portals and an hour each way to Barney waterfall. Easy grade.

2. Mount Maroon

For great 360-degree views and return for effort, the day hike up Mount Maroon is a must. Lower and less strenuous than Mount Barney, the five-hour return trip provides views to Lamington Plateau, Mount Barney, Mount Lindsay, Mount May, Mount Ernest, Mount Ballow, the lower peaks of the Moogerah region, Maroon Dam and west to the Main Range. The impressive bowl formation of the north peak is visible from the main summit. Even the hike up the initial steep forested ridge provides great views and spectacular towering sheer cliffs of the north





Scaling Mt Barney

3. South Ridge

For the cautious first timer, a 10-hour return trip up South Ridge will provide a moderate safer track up Mount Barney to Rum Jungle, the saddle between East and West Peaks. A return trip to either summit before the descent provides the reward for the hard work and incentive to return. South Ridge was originally coined Peasants Ridge as the easiest route up. While it may be the easiest, great care is still required and first timers are best accompanied by an experienced hiker.

From the end of Yellow Pinch Road at the locked gate, follow the dirt road up over the first hill through a gate and down across paddocks to a cattle grid with gate. Cross a concrete ford where national park signs are erected and around 2.5 kilometres from the start, past Cronans Creek as the forest thickens, a sign marks the start of South Ridge track. A palm gully and rainforest is the last of the thick vegetation before the track continues up through open forest. The track is easy to follow and the first obstacle is a rock slab, slippery in the wet. Continue the ascent along the track with several rocky sections that are relatively straightforward. Rum Jungle is a shady camp spot and a seasonal creek runs 50 metres away. A grassy clearing peers down Barney Gorge and is the site of a bushwalkers' hut that was removed many years before. If time, energy and weather permits, cross the creek and follow a track that leads up towards East Peak. East Peak is less technical and offers unobstructed views compared to West Peak. Rocky slabs and tracks through shrubs should take 30 minutes to reach a small rock band where you'll scramble up to reach the last dash to the summit. It is worth taking note of the route on your way up as the descent can provide false leads and backtracking. On a clear day, Mount Warning pops up to the east, the buildings of Brisbane to the north and a wedge-tailed eagle will be found circling above.

The descent follows the path of the ascent. At Rum Jungle, be careful to follow the track with the orange marker and not to follow a false track into Egan Creek or down Barney Gorge.

An alternative is to follow South East Ridge and descend South Ridge. South East Ridge has exposed vantage lookouts and is not for those with a fear of heights. While it is not a technical route, great care is required and it will test nerves with the airy ridge. South East Ridge will appear much longer to ascend with false summits luring unsuspecting hikers into thinking they are much higher than they are. The track starts a few hundred metres before the South Ridge sign, a faint cross is carved into a tree as a track leads up a ridge to the right. It can be tricky to find. Up through open eucalypt forest, a rocky outcrop with spectacular views across to Mount Lindsay and Mount Ernest is

a good spot for a breather. Carefully traversing across the rocks, continue up to a second rock line and continue up to a cliff band, which the track weaves up to the right. After several rock bands and small knolls, Wave Rock ascends five metres up the flat rock. It can be tricky in the wet and a small rope would be useful. The ridge becomes steep and exposed with large drop offs, seemingly much more difficult than they are. Be careful. The banksia shrubs provide comfort with their support before the last steep, rocky scramble takes you to a false summit. Follow the track west close to the edge, dropping into a saddle where you step across with a view straight down hundreds of metres of the east face. Scramble up some rocks before light forest and across to the East Peak. Descend to Rum jungle and down South Ridge. 10 hours return, moderate grade for fit hikers and those with reasonable height tolerances.

4. Logan Ridge

For the adventurous hiker with confidence in rock scrambling and exposure, Logan Ridge is a great day out with the most direct ridge straight to East Peak. Graded hard and best in dry weather, the views and physical challenge provides a great adventure. A rope used by a competent climber can be useful, particularly for exposed sections.

From Yellow Pinch, rock hop across the Logan River and follow west across cleared flats before reaching a National Park sign on a forested ridge. Follow the track across the foothills of Mount Barney with great views of the east face and north aspect of the massif. As the track steepens, the first rock slab 25 metres in length gains height and assures hikers they are on their way. Tracks weave up rock bands, so before you climb any rock, watch out for a track that avoids any difficult climbing. One slight obstacle requires a rock scramble before the track weaves up the narrowing ridge. A steep exposed section up a rock slab to a tree may require a rope for those less confident with height as the drop off is a hundred metres down. Climb the convenient tree to gain the tricky scramble to safe ground. The route gives great views of the steep rock walls as it enters a gully and then an easy rock face to zigzag up with big eroded pot holds. Following the ridge, a small rock face is climbed with a few large arm stretches, while not hard, a few metres can be a good test. The ridge flattens and thickens with shrubs before more rock bands and rock notches are scrambled up to the final section up a steep gully. A rope can be useful, however the track uses rocks, trees and logs to aid for a steep last effort towards east peak. The views are incredible on this section. Logan Ridge enters light trees with a two hundred metre walk west to the main summit rock.

peak. The route looks deceptively steep and even impassable with the vertical cliffs, which provide a great test of resilience and trust in the route to weave up avoiding steep areas.

The moderately graded hike leads through open paddocks and up steep open eucalypt forest with sometimes-large step-ups across logs. From a great rest spot at a rocky exposed lookout, follow the orange triangle markers up through large boulders along the ridge before dropping back down into the major gully. While the gully is nothing more than a scramble at times, be careful of rock fall especially with parties higher above either with the ascent or descent. Remember to look up and enjoy the vertical cliff and wild flowers. At the top of the gully, a side trip twenty metres to the east (your left) to a false summit provides a reward for your effort and a view of the rocky slabs that lead up to the summit.

Follow a dry creek through open forest on a track to open rocky slabs. Observe where the track leaves the forest, as it is easy to miss on the descent. In white out mist, parties become disoriented. Several rock cairns mark the trail with small sections of track before the obvious summit ridge to the three metres-high, piled rock pyramid. Enjoy lunch and the views before returning the same way.

I recommend not descending Logan Ridge due to the steep rocky slabs. Descend either South East Ridge or South Ridge (as described earlier).

5. Leaning Peak and Eagles Ridge

For those inclined for a non-technical climb with a rope, Leaning Peak or Eagles Ridge on Mount Barney, or Mount Lindsay are excellent choices. These routes are for those competent in rope skills and require a 50m rope, harness and rappel equipment.

Leaning Peak, accessed from Barney Creek and Barney waterfall, follow Leaning Ridge, which becomes steeper and narrower as a track weaves through the shrubs in sections and climbs rock bands. A short exposed climb onto Leaning Peak, a belay is prudent here. A 25-metre abseil is required off the southern side of the summit. Don't trust old slings tied around small trees and always use multiple anchor points. Ensure you are at the lowest point so the rope reaches the small ledge in the saddle below. The abseil appears much longer than it is, due to the exposed drop offs each side. Either continue up to North Peak and to East Peak summit and descend the choice of ridges, or traverse east from the abseil and descend the large slabs into Rocky Creek. This is the preferred option to return to the Lower Portals car park. Carpooling or a long walk back to the one car is required for parties that continue up to North and East Peaks.

Eagles Ridge is a longer ascent with many small peaks to traverse by either scrambling or abseiling. Access is off the Lower Portals track and can be a trip to North and East Peak, or a return using Rocky Creek.

Mount Lindsay is best climbed with a 50-metre rope, which serves well for an abseil descent on the lower vertical climbs. While graded as a low-grade rock climb in sections, loose rock, steep rock faces and scrubby sections make the day trip a serious undertaking. Most hikers avoid it due to the exposed scrambling, while

most climbers avoid it because of the poor rock quality and most complain the forested summit obstruct the views across to Mount Barney. Hike three kilometres from the border gate on the Mount Lindsay highway along a fire trail up a steep hill to jump a fence and follow the track that heads steeply through forest on the western side. The climb starts with a steep rock face with lots of good holds, before a convenient tree provides a bridge to continue up the steep ridge. The second tier is climbed up a small vertical cliff, which can be slippery. A thick chain is hooked through a rock gap for a rope belay point. It is an exposed few moves and best descended with a short abseil. Follow the ridge through forest to the summit for a slight view. Continue south for better views from the western side of the top tier before returning to descend.

6. Mount Ballow

For a long day out with multiple summits, Mount Ballow is a spectacular semicircular ridge day walk. It takes in the Mont Serrat Lookout, Focal Peak, Durramlee Peak, Double Peak, Junction Peak and Nothofagus Peak. This walk is accessed from the four-wheel drive car park at Cleared Ridge and Yamarah Creek. While the initial walk is tracked to Mont Serrat Lookout, good navigation and common sense is required to complete the circuit in a day. Winter provides cool clear days, however parties need to start at sunrise and move quickly to make the trip in daylight hours. I recommend parties stay the night prior at Waterfall Creek Reserve to aid in the predawn drive up the ridge. There is no camping on Cleared Ridge. Often overlooked, Mount Ballow holds ancient trees and spectacular views of the National Park.

MULTI-DAY WALKS

South Ridge to East Peak

A classic overnight through hike would ascend Mount Barney via South Ridge to camp in Rum

Jungle with an afternoon summit of East Peak. A return trip the following morning to West Peak before returning down South Ridge would complete an enjoyable two days out.

4-day Mount Barney Loop

For a multi-day excursion to explore Mount Barney National Park and several peaks, a carpool will make life easy. On Day 1 with the drive out to Yellow Pinch, hike to the Cronan's Creek campsite at the base of Mount Barney and leave packs. A half-day trip to Mount Ernest will provide clear views of Mount Maroon, Mount Barney and Mount Lindsay. Day 2 sees the hike up Mount Barney start 500 metres from the campsite up South Ridge. Leaving packs at Rum Jungle, take in East Peak for the afternoon. On Day 3, descend Barney Gorge in dry weather, as the rock slabs can be slippery. At Barney Creek, continue to the lower portals by either the creek, or the ridge track to avoid rock hopping to camp at the Lower Portals campsite. On day four, hike downstream and across open plains across to Paddy Peak and Paddys Plain at the base of Mount May and then hike up a dry creek to Mount Maroon. After a quick summit, drop down the northern side on the track to Cotswood to pick up a car and car pool back to Yellow Pinch Road.

There are many other choices to explore in the Mount Barney National Park, so hike responsibly with a light footprint and enjoy the diversity of a truly magical region. W

Queenslander, Alexander Robey navigates his inner landscape inspired and energised by nature. He has hiked and climbed throughout NZ and Europe, climbed the Matterhorn, guided a team up Denali in Alaska, filmed in the Himalayas and kayaked Bass Strait, amongst dozens of trips around the Tasmanian wilderness. Alexander is a registered clinical hypnotherapist, psychotherapist and runs wellness programs.



www.alexanderrobey.com

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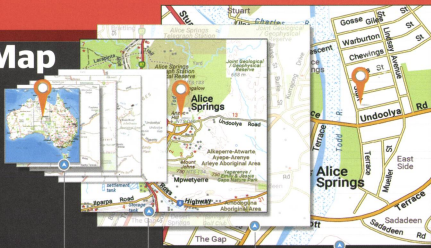
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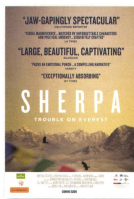
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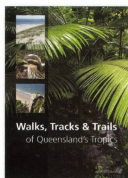
Topographic 1:18K



SHERPA

from director Jennifer Peedom (Felix Media)

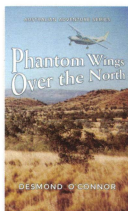
With a general release in Australia of April 2016, this documentary can't help but to be compared to 2015's Everest, which explored the 1996 mountaineering tragedy that first highlighted growing concerns regarding commercial exploitation in the Himalayas. Sherpa, by contrast, never intended to depict any specific disaster. Director Jennifer Peedom instead took her team to Everest following a fight between Sherpa guides and paying visitors to the mountain in 2013, hoping to investigate the root of growing unrest among the Sherpas. The documentary, while being dutifully insightful, lurches into an altogether more intense realm when an avalanche occurs in the Khumbu Icefall, killing 16 Sherpas. The subsequent footage offers stark insight into the tension that occurs at the intersection of commercial mountaineering, increasingly well-educated local workers and a lack of government support and regulation. Beneath it all – as with so many socioeconomic matters today – lies the spectre of climate change, which is inevitably causing the rate of such avalanches to increase on Everest, and may jeopardise the future of climbing there altogether.



WALKS, TRACKS & TRAILS OF QUEENSLAND'S TROPICS

by Derrick Stone (CSIRO Publishing, \$39.95)

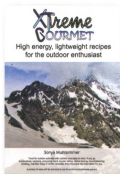
Featuring 150 walks, tracks and trails in Queensland's coastal strip between Rockhampton and Cooktown, this book captures tropical walking adventures for all comers. Explore Hinchinbrook Island, Daintree National Park, the Herbert River and much more in 280 pages of maps and information covering just about every facet imaginable. For each walk, essential details for length, difficulty and access are provided, as well as more thorough description track notes. Even better, much space is given over to high quality imagery that is enticing, but also helps readers know what to expect from any given route. For those wary of wandering in the wet tropics, author Derrick Stone offers two pages of specific, practical advice on all the major problems, writing: 'By using common sense and appropriate protection and precautions most will never be sighted or encountered.' These dangers include ticks, stinging plants, venomous animals, cassowaries and crocodiles.



PHANTOM WINGS OVER THE NORTH

by Desmond O'Connor (Short Stop Press, \$19.99)

Based in WA, author Desmond O'Connor has worked as an engineer, surveyor, pilot and even as the president of the Western Australian Section of the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Bringing his unique experiences to bear in this brief tale of adventure (the book weighs in at 60 pages), O'Connor throws his protagonists, teenaged twins Joan and Mark, into an international mystery set in the remote Pilbara when they are confronted with a mobile laboratory operated by Eastern Europeans. The language used is suitable for a youth audience and the book contains colour photography and even a foldout map of the Pilbara region. Reminiscent of the adventure stories of yore, O'Connor offers authenticity and experience in iconic Australian wilderness – a winner for school libraries and the bookshelf of any adventurous teen.



XTREME GOURMET: HIGH ENERGY, LIGHTWEIGHT RECIPES FOR THE OUTDOOR ENTHUSIAST

by Sonya Muhsimmer (Self published, \$30)

Author Sonya Muhsimmer brings her experience in the outdoors and professional background as a chef and food technologist to bear in this collection of lightweight recipes. In a market increasingly dominated by pre-packaged meal alternatives, Muhsimmer's book provides all the information required for even the hesitant cook to become proficient in planning and preparing nutrition for a multi-day journey in the wild. With a focus on frugality, each recipe is designed to be inexpensive and each ingredient easy to find. A portion of the book is given to explaining nutrition and specific quirks of various foods and food types, whereas nearly two-thirds is given to recipes (broadly broken out into Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Snacks and desserts, and Drinks). As a paperback of under 150 pages, this cookbook is even light enough to be considered for taking with you on the journey, account of Balls Pyramid ever published.

Directory

The *Wild* Directory is a reference point for outdoors-related businesses worldwide. List your firm for only \$48 an issue (\$58 in spot red).

For more information, contact Campbell Phillips via email on campbell.phillips@primcreative.com.au or telephone 03 9690 8766

Suppliers

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READER GEAR REVIEW

NEMO NOCTURNE 15 \$539.95

I've always been frustrated and uncomfortable trying to sleep in traditional sleeping bags – and even more so in the mummy-like shape of expedition-style bags. So when I saw Nemo's Nocturne range was available in Australia, I had to try it. Nemo advertise what they call a 'spoon' shape silhouette for these bags, which probably resembles a figure eight more than it does a spoon. This means I've been able to get some breathing space around my elbows and knees where usually I'd be feeling much more constricted! I also enjoy the hood, which acts as a pillow pocket. The three-season, regular size is ideal for me, but they do come in a four-season weight and 'long' version for the taller body types as well. Well done, Nemo!

Jacqui Gillespie



Long distance trekker *Laura Waters* discusses the events that led to her walking New Zealand's Te Araroa trail

A long walk in the wild fundamentally changed the course of my life. After five months of walking 3000 kilometres from one end of New Zealand to the other, life could never be the same again. The genie was out and there was no way I was going to be able to stuff it back into a corporate cubicle in the city.

I've never been a fan of 'normal'. A career in travel and tourism enabled me to spice up the nine to five by regularly 'shifting my office' to different places. I worked in the UK, sold scuba diving holidays around the South Pacific and Asia, worked for a dive operator on the Great Barrier Reef, plus various roles at ski resorts in the USA and Australia. This provided an abundance of travel opportunities, including "educational" trips, giving me a taste of adventure and foreign lands. (Of course I needed to know what it was like to dive with silvertip sharks in French Polynesia if I was going to be able to sell it!)

My first semi-serious foray into the outdoors was in 1993 mountain biking coast to coast across England across the narrowest, albeit hilliest, bit. With no official route at the time, I ended up having to carry my bike half the way, scrambling up and over rocky crags and balancing from one boulder to the next on seemingly endless steep scree. It was one of the most exhausting trips I would tackle for years but it got me thinking – how far could I go? What was I capable of?

Five years later I borrowed a heavy old grey canvas backpack with external frame for my first overnight hike. It was the start of a deep and lasting love affair with nature, hiking and the great outdoors.

The announcement a few years ago that New Zealand had unveiled a new long distance hiking trail from Cape Reinga at the top of the North Island to Bluff at the bottom of the South Island caught my eye. The trail wound its way along deserted beaches, dense forests, volcanic desert and high alpine mountain ranges, involving river crossings and remote and exposed terrain. Despite not having walked further than 65 kilometres in any one trip it sounded to me like the perfect balance of adventure and challenge.

I started the hike late in 2013 with a friend who pulled out on the second day leaving me to face the monumental challenge alone. Fighting uncertainty and fear I decided to keep going one day at a time and just see how far I could get. I walked alone, I walked with others, I got caught in a snowstorm, dislocated my shoulder twice,



got snowed in at a hut for three days, crossed countless rivers and five months later I finally reached Bluff.

It was a transforming experience. The journey taught me the restorative power of nature and the clarity that can be gained from immersing yourself in wilderness, far from the 'noise' and busyness that is so intrinsic to modern day living. Distant from the constant bombardment of media and advertising I also discovered a new outlook on life. I had just walked for five months with just one bag of belongings and one outfit and I'd never been happier. It seemed I actually needed very little for a blissful life.

And in the solitude of that hike I unravelled my identity, discovering what I really wanted in life – and that didn't involve being in an office. I found the courage to pursue my dreams because the trail also taught me that most fears we experience are largely imagined – just a construct of our brains, not something that should stop us from going forward.

So I quit the corporate world a year ago and now aim to live simply, hiking and writing to share my experiences and inspire others to follow their own dreams and to opt for a simpler life connected with nature. I believe it has much to offer modern society, lessons that can heal both us and our over-stressed planet.

I currently write a blog, travel articles and I'm working on a book about my New Zealand journey.



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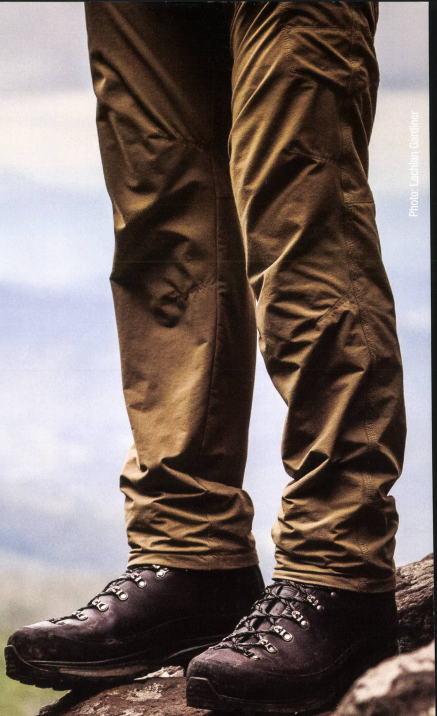


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